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THE

GENESIS OF THE CHURCH

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THE

GENESIS OF THE CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

It is a strange phenomenon, one which supplies to the adversaries of Christianity a formidable argument against its divine origin, that among those who believe Holy Scripture to be a revelation from God, and agree in deriving their religion from this source, the widest conceivable differences of opinion exist as to the true social form of the Christian religion; in other words, as to the constitution, polity, functions, and authority of that which is known as the Church of Christ. In religions originating in the instincts of man such varieties of form might be expected; but is it to be conceived possible that a perfect religion, founded by One in whom Deity and manhood are united, should be so uncertain in its teaching as to leave no sufficient guidance in practical questions, touching human life and human relations at all points, and affecting the organisation of human society for the very purposes in which Christianity was given? And it is no reply to this to affirm, that the true organic form of Christianity must be determined, not from Scripture alone, but by

the actual existence of this form; that the Church is as much a fact in the history of the Christian religion as Holy Scripture itself. For on the one hand these two facts, if they are parts of the same divine scheme, must be in perfect agreement, so that one will witness to and confirm the other; and further it must be remembered that the existence of Christianity in its true social form, if we go a step beyond the present time when there are many forms claiming to be its representatives, can only be ascertained from history; and the only contemporaneous and authentic history that Christians possess of the original form of Christianity is the New Testament. We cannot therefore answer the objection against Christianity as defective for the purposes for which it is given, if the history of its original institution would justify different, and not only different but contradictory, conclusions;—if, for example, some might fairly conclude from the records that the external form of Christianity is a matter of indifference, and others that there is one, and only one, polity, invested with large powers over the human family. And yet these are the very questions at issue among Christians.

It must be observed further, that these differences of opinion as to the visible form of Christianity are not like differences as to its doctrines, but are much less easily explained. For the doctrines of Christianity, dealing with the relations of the spiritual world, and those of the infinite God with man, can only be represented to the understanding of man by comparisons, necessarily imperfect, with earthly things. They can never be legitimate subjects for the speculative reason; and however clearly and sufficiently they may be expressed, they are always liable to be obscured by the

imperfect spiritual vision of the human mind; so that these broken and interrupted rays of truth produce many varieties of theological opinion, according as different minds perceive different aspects of truth, especially as men are apt to imagine that what they themselves see, if not the whole, is at least the most essential part of the whole. And the theological system derived from these fragmentary truths, and apparently following by necessary logical consequence, is held as if it were identical with the revealed truth itself, and all not consistent with this system is counted as a contradiction of the truth. Thus the differences which exist among Christians as to faith and doctrine may be clearly traced to the human understanding itself; and any objection against Christianity on this score might easily be turned into an argument in its favour. But with questions as to the Church the case is wholly different. Christian doctrine is indirectly involved in them, and the relation of man to a spiritual and supernatural world underlies them all; yet in themselves they are of a different order from matters of faith and doctrine. If one organic form were ordained as the true representative of Christianity, this could have been as distinctly revealed by Jesus Christ as the Jewish polity was by Moses; or if Christianity were intended to have been a doctrine without any determined form, this also might have been made perfectly intelligible to the human understanding. It is impossible therefore to explain the great variety of opinions among Christians on the subject of the Church, on the same grounds as we may account for doctrinal differences.

And yet these diverse Church theories are so intimately connected with the practical duties and the practical life of Christians, that he must have had small

experience of human life who deems them immaterial. They represent very different mental conceptions of man's relation to God and to his fellow-men, which conceptions form and modify the characters of men very largely, and enter into many other questions besides those which are expressly ecclesiastical. And although it may be admitted that differences of opinion as to the Church, leading men into widely-diverging paths, may often be originally due to differences of mental temperament disqualifying some for receiving, or at least firmly apprehending, ideas which others accept almost instinctively, and which at once exercise great power over them; yet it must also be remembered that truth is necessary to a man, not in proportion as he is apt to receive it, but, on the contrary, in proportion as he requires it to mould his own character, to supply deficiencies there, to correct opposite tendencies, and save him from that one-sidedness of mind which is the parent of innumerable falsehoods and evils.

The argument therefore against Christianity as an imperfect religious system, because it seems to have left in doubt and obscurity questions practically affecting human interests, appears at first sight very forcible. And yet its force depends on an assumption which every thoughtful student of the New Testament must perceive to be untrue—namely, that Jesus Christ was a *legislator*, and that it was consistent with His mission to give *laws*, in the proper sense of the word—that is, rules to be obeyed merely because of the authority of him who imposes them. But the teaching both of Christ Himself and of His apostles indicates that His Gospel was intended to affect and renovate human life and relations in a method far more effectual and more truly divine; not

by the force of laws acting on man from without, but by laws written on the heart—by a new life from within. This is a method more truly divine because it is more in accordance with all those manifestations of God in the natural world which are within the reach of man's understanding. The physical universe obtains its true order and form, not by some authoritative interposition from without, but by a law within itself, branching out into innumerable and interminable sequences of cause and effect, and developing all the various forms, and these exact and definite, which represent and express the action of the secondary and dependent laws. It is often impossible to trace the connection and interdependence of these laws; and yet the human mind becomes convinced, in the study of nature, that no sequence that is observed is isolated; that every law depends on another more general law; and the result is, that a knowledge of natural laws, often materially affecting human interests, cannot be ascertained from facts which lie on the surface, but must be determined by long and patient investigation. But it is no argument against the benevolence of the Creator that the laws of health, for example, or of political economy, on which the material prosperity of man depends, are but obscurely indicated, and are much misapprehended by many. Nor should we argue that they are of little value, and may be neglected, because of the difficulty which has attended their discovery.

Those therefore who demand of Christianity definite rules as to the form in which it should be represented, claim that which is inconsistent with its own account of its divine origin, and with a really divine religion —that is, one which shall be in accordance with the

universe of God. What we ought to expect is, that we shall find in the history and teaching of its Founder the elementary principles out of which the true form of Christianity shall be evolved. We may look for such instructions as shall be sufficient to direct the action of these principles; for such a history of their gradual development as shall enable us to determine into what they will grow, how they will affect, and be themselves affected by, the various conditions of human life; what counteracting tendencies may impede or deform their proper growth;—in short, we must be prepared to study the laws of the development of Christianity in the relations and fellowships of human life, in the same manner as science investigates the laws of the natural world. The perfection of the religion will appear, not in its governing laws being patent to all—which, as far as we can judge from the analogy of nature, it is impossible that such laws should ever be—but in the adaptation of its true development to the fulfilment of its own purpose, the spiritual renovation of mankind.

If this be a correct view of that which Holy Scripture may be expected to contain as to the constitution and functions of the Church, it is evident that the great differences of external form which professing Christianity has assumed may be easily explained. They will simply indicate that, either from want of knowledge and patient study, or from some moral imperfection or other disturbing influences, Christians do not recognise, or are differently affected by, those laws which should determine the true order and the external form of Christianity. We cannot conclude that the laws themselves are insufficient or uncertain in their operation, as we should infer if in nature its order were confused and its forms devoid of regularity; because

spiritual laws do not act on man, as physical laws act on nature, by an irresistible sequence and effect, but through the concurrence of the human will, and to a great extent through the knowledge of the laws themselves. To impute confusion and disorder in the organisation of Christian society to the insufficiency of Holy Scripture, and not to causes within man himself, is an assumption as gratuitous, as if we should assume that because men neglect through ignorance or wilfulness the laws of health, therefore no such laws exist.

But another explanation, which has much show of a philosophical argument, is sometimes given. It is argued that Christianity being itself a living power, and not an external form, it may be expected that in its development in the world it will manifest itself in many very different types, even as the life of nature represents itself in an endless diversity of outward forms. Such illustrations however, ornamental as they may be as flowers of rhetoric, are very misleading unless we examine them carefully. The same analogy is used by others as a proof that all the various religions of the world, however diverse and contradictory, may be different expressions of the same fundamental truth; and the proof is just as good in one case as in the other. But the diversity of nature is real unity, because all its forms are connected parts of the same fundamental order. In nature there is no contradiction or confusion; "every seed," to use the words of an apostle, "hath its own body;" the same germ of life is evolved into its own proper form, which external conditions may somewhat modify, but cannot change into a type totally different. Or since we must assume, as it seems, in this philosophical plea for diversity, that all the various forms of nature have been evolved from the

same original monad, yet, after all, the varieties in *genus homo* are confined within very narrow limits. Sometimes, we must allow, nature falls short of its highest aim, and only produces the *simiad* family; and among them, no doubt, many varieties of form may be found. So that if we must accept the analogy of those who see in the divisions of Christendom a counterpart of the beautiful diversity of nature, we ought to follow it to its legitimate conclusion, and admit that the forms of nature are not only different, but of very different value; and that any considerable divergence from the highest type indicates degradation or some monstrous growth. For, further, we must bear in mind, that if in the natural world irregularities are sometimes found, much more will they occur in the action of any spiritual laws of development; first, because all spiritual motive powers find in the very nature of man much that resists instead of favouring their action; and then because they are exposed to perturbing influences from without, continually tending to interrupt them, so that if in nature abnormal growths present themselves, nothing can be more certain than that they will appear in the various developments in human life of the spiritual powers of Christianity.

Indeed, had it not been for these disturbing influences within and without; if man were as apt to recognise and follow the laws of spiritual life as nature is to obey its own laws; if it were not necessary to apply corrections, so to speak, in order to insure the true and legitimate operation of spiritual principles,—much of the practical teaching of Holy Scripture would be superfluous. No directions whatever would be required if men were wholly governed by the first motive power of the Christian life—that is, love to God and

man. All results would have flowed spontaneously from this source. All secondary laws would have derived themselves by necessary consequence from this primary law. But human nature and human life being such as they are, revelation not only supplies motive principles, but also many practical directions, which are not laws or rules in the proper sense, but rather specimens and instances by which the legitimate results of inward principles may be tested and determined. This, which is too obviously true in regard to the personal religious life to require illustration, must hold also in this development of spiritual laws in the social life of Christians — that is, in the Church of Christ. Our investigations therefore into the genesis of the Christian Church must follow this course. The elementary principles of Christian society would be of themselves sufficient to determine the forms which that society would assume if only they had perfectly free play in human life; but as they have not, we must look further for such positive instructions as may enable us to understand the action of these fundamental laws, and for such examples and instances as may be trusted as true and normal growths of the vital principles; although, indeed, even as regards these, we have to inquire whether special and temporary circumstances may have imparted a somewhat different form from that which under other conditions would most truly represent the principles.

This is certainly no short and easy method of arriving at conclusions; the method of selecting a few concise, emphatic texts—which, being inspired, are supposed to have plenary authority by themselves without any reference to their context—building up a system on them, or throwing them at opponents, whilst other

inconvenient texts are melted down in the crucible of a self-consistent theory, is undoubtedly a far simpler mode of dealing with these questions; and it is wonderful what contentment some minds find in the bold and determined assumptions which are required for this process. But it is hardly one which can produce unity of judgment among Christians. It is indeed no exaggeration to say that in no single branch of human knowledge could anything approaching to certainty have been attained, if it had been studied as the science of ecclesiology (if I may so use a much-abused term) is usually studied in Holy Scripture. Sentiment and preconceived opinion too often determine the interpretations, and supply the wanting links in the evidence; a favourite idea is expanded and illuminated with favourite texts, without any attempt to balance it by its opposite, apart from which it is only a half truth, destitute of vital energy: a serious earnest endeavour to ascertain the true principle at issue, through a careful process of induction, seems to be considered not only unnecessary, but even inadmissible in so sacred a sphere, and for questions respecting which it is supposed that some indefinable religious sentiment must determine them; and, what is of all most fatal to a right solution of the question, because it vitiates the whole process of the inquiry, the attempt is sometimes made to construct out of the New Testament a system of law, with authoritative rules binding on Christians simply because they are commanded. Many indeed shrink from these modes of handling Scripture; they will not venture, by any special pleading, to force conclusions in favour of their own opinions; and not feeling their ground sure in Scripture, they are content with arguing that, as a whole, the teaching of the New Testament points in such

and such directions, and that what is wanting in express instructions may be supplemented by inference and more general principles. But no vague treatment of so important a subject can satisfy any thoughtful and impartial mind. It is evident that these general conclusions are really much modified by the habits of thought, and the preconceived judgment, of those who form them. The whole process of the argument is not exposed to view; there is no attempt to attain the same kind of certainty as to results as may be attained in the study of the natural world. And yet we have seen that, unless this be attainable, it seems impossible to answer the objection against Christianity as an imperfect religion, not completely adapted to the wants of man.

In this work an attempt is made to lay the foundation of ecclesiology as a science, by investigating the development of the Christian Church out of its elementary principles to the close of the apostolic age. Such an investigation need be little more than a dispassionate analysis of the teaching of Holy Scripture, the materials for which are abundantly supplied by the labours of others. I do not profess to conduct the inquiry further than may be necessary for a comprehensive view of the whole subject; and on most points I touch briefly, that the argument may not be encumbered. For the same reason, the expositions of Scripture that are given are discussed only so far as may enable any tolerably well-informed student of the Greek Testament to form his own judgment on them. If they do not commend themselves to his mind, I fear I should not make them more clear by loading my pages with quotations and authorities. But, in truth, the argument depends on no special rendering of particular passages, but on the

whole tenor of the New Testament teaching; whilst the unity of the scheme evolved in the argument will, I think, render some passages of Scripture intelligible, for the explanation of which little aid can be obtained from commentators. My purpose indeed in the present work is rather to indicate a more comprehensive method of dealing with this great question than to complete the proofs. The conviction that the evidence is abundantly sufficient to establish most definite and certain conclusions, as certain as any that science deduces from the observation of nature, has been strengthened immeasurably by the investigation itself. Whether I make a right use of the evidence, others must judge; in so extensive a field of inquiry there will certainly be many omissions, and probably not a few errors.

I have already intimated that the process of such an investigation as is proposed ought in some respects to resemble those through which the laws of the physical world are determined. For although inquiries into the constitution of the Christian Church soon lead us up to truths which cannot be fully expressed in forms of human thought, and therefore are not proper subjects for the speculative reason, yet this is equally the case in the world of nature. Every scientific inquiry brings us into contact with natural forces which are in themselves unknowable by the human understanding. But the fact of the physical forces themselves being incomprehensible by the human mind does not make our conclusions as to the laws of their operation less certain; both the existence and the action of these laws may be known without our approaching one step nearer the solution of the underlying mystery. The mere fact therefore of the forces which act on man in Christianity being supernatural would not of itself alter the condi-

tions of the question. Practically, however, the method of the investigation must be somewhat different. The laws of the natural world are to be ascertained by induction from its phenomena, and then, the laws being sufficiently determined, we may discover and anticipate by deduction what results will follow from their action in particular cases. But we cannot employ deductive reasoning as freely in this inquiry. For the problem of the development of the Christian life into its organic forms is far more complicated than any that can arise in the natural world, because in it is involved the twofold question of man's relation to God, and man's relation to his fellow. The problem of man's moral and social nature is of itself too intricate to be solved by our knowledge; much more the question, How the spiritual and supernatural powers of Christianity most truly express themselves in man's social relations? The powers that act indeed are part of the Christian revelation, and respecting these there is no dispute. That the Spirit of God works in man; that through faith in Christ He awakens in the heart of man love to God and his brother; that this love tends to produce fellowship among Christians, and to combine them for the purpose of extending the knowledge of Christ's truth to others;—these are fundamental principles, which no one questions without denying Christianity altogether. The difficulty arises when we pass from these primary laws to those which are derived from them; when we have to discover what forms will be developed under these influences, what will be the order and organic life of the new world. It is just as impossible for us to determine these by any *a priori* reasoning, as it would be to predict (supposing the hypothesis of the nebular origin of the universe to be true) into

what forms and order nature would be evolved by its primary laws. And another question presents itself here. The naturalistic theory of the genesis of the universe is held by some to be really identical with that which revelation presents to our faith—namely, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—because in nature, it is argued, the will and wisdom of God work by nature. Into this question we need not enter, although certainly the evidence as yet adduced of the causes still operating in nature having been sufficient for creation can hardly satisfy any unbiassed judgment. At all events, whatever be the other side of the truth, "by faith we know that the worlds were made by the word of God." Now what is the truth as to the far higher work, the genesis of the new creation of God? Many, who would reject the naturalistic view of the first creation as atheistical, yet hold that the Church of Christ was nothing more than the natural result of primary spiritual forces—that there was no interposition of the Word of God to determine its order and forms. They repudiate as unspiritual the idea that Jesus Christ, the Creator of the new universe of God, did determine by His will any form or order for His Church. And yet surely, if the forms of nature are the result, not of mere physical forces, but of God's creative word, much more is the exercise of the divine will required to exhibit the true order of the second creation, because in the latter there are disturbing forces to overcome. And it is no more unspiritual to believe that Jesus Christ would determine such forms, than it is doing violence to nature to hold that the types of the natural world are ordered by God. But the question before us Christians, and that which I propose to investigate, is, not what might be anticipated, but what we must con-

clude from the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ and of those who under the direction of His Spirit have recorded the history of this new creation. From these we must learn what was actually the genesis of the Church, even as from the first book of sacred Scripture we learn what was the genesis of the heavens and the earth, of the human race and human society. Whether there is a normal order instituted by the divine wisdom of Christ, and what are the true elements of that order, are questions to be solved only through a careful examination of the sacred record. We must not expect always to be able to trace the connection between the primary spiritual laws and the forms and order which are their true result, although we may be assured that such a connection exists. In nature, who can distinguish all the processes through which the seed grows into the plant, with its own proper form,—its structure, character, colour, fragrance, being determined by some peculiarities in the original germ, utterly undiscernible to our senses, yet certainly there? Need we therefore be surprised if we are sometimes at a loss to explain why the germs of spiritual life should issue, according to the will of Christ, in one form rather than another? It is true that in the spiritual life the service is reasonable, and therefore it is our duty to examine into the reasons of the laws that are indicated, that we may obey them in the spirit, not in the letter; and the more diligently and patiently that we examine Holy Scripture do we discover these reasons. But to assume that they must be always apparent, is certainly no evidence of spiritual perception, but rather of unchristian presumption.

But further we must observe that neither the fact of the forces acting on men being spiritual and super-

natural, nor the exercise of the divine will and wisdom in the creative process, must lead us to suppose that the phenomena of the genesis of the Church would be unnatural, and not according to those laws of development to which all things that are the subject of human knowledge can form. For genesis, development, evolution, or by whatever name it may be called, is nothing else than the fulfilment of these laws; they are as clearly exhibited in the description given in Holy Writ of the creation of the universe, as in any of those operations of nature in which science investigates them. In the beginning, the inspired writer says, the whole was without form and void; the elements existed, but were generally diffused, and without distinction. The result of the action of creative energy was twofold; collection and concentration into coherent masses, and separation into multiform existences, which are all parts of one cosmos, one consistent whole. There is light, but at the same time a separation of the light from the darkness; not uniform undivided day, but day and night distinguished, yet succeeding one another as parts of one whole. The waters above the firmament are divided from those beneath. Earth and sea are separated, yet in this separation there is no divorce. Again, the elementary principles in the earth and seas are gathered into manifold forms of life, vegetable and animal, all of them definite and distinct, but all of them connected parts of the great order, links in the mighty chain of nature, until the work is matured and completed in man, who is not only the most complex and definitely organised of all created forms, but is made in the image of God, with a new and higher life, and he is the sovereign of all earthly things.

The process of all development that comes within

the range of human knowledge, or that can be represented by human thought, is similar to this and conformable to the same laws. In the whole of the physical universe, in the social and political life of man, even in the various results of the human intellect and human energies, science discovers the same laws of evolution or progress. An elementary state is one in which there is no distinction of parts or functions; the whole is homogeneous, without definiteness or consistent order. An imperfect state is one in which the separation is still proceeding or is not completely defined. Maturity is that state in which all those separations and distinctions are perfected, of which the whole is capable without injury to its unity, or to its proper action as one whole and the subordination of its parts. Again, if these separations are either confused or at variance with the order of the whole, it is an abnormal or morbid growth and no true development.*

These principles, which modern science has established in all the order of nature, and examples of which will at once occur to every thoughtful mind, are here stated, not that we may use them in order to establish by deduction what must be the process of development of the social form of Christianity, but simply that, as we determine this process by induction from the actual history of its genesis, we may compare it in our own mind with the analogies supplied in nature itself, and may thus be aided in distinguishing more accurately what is, and what cannot be, true evolution of the organic life.

* "At the same time that evolution is a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, it is a change from the indefinite to the definite. Along with an advance from simplicity to complexity, there is an advance from confusion to order, from undetermined arrangement to determined arrangement."—H. Spencer's First Principles, p. 362, second edition.

I must however, before I conclude this Introduction, anticipate briefly some objections which may be made, from different quarters, against the line of argument adopted in this work.

It may be objected, from the side of free-thinkers, that this argument is destitute of a scientific basis, because the Scriptures are assumed without proof to be the work of inspiration; they cannot form the basis for investigations such as are here proposed, unless they are a real and perfect manifestation of the divine mind, such as nature is, from which conclusions may be drawn with certainty, because we are assured of the universality and permanence of the laws by which it is governed. To this it might be sufficient to reply, that when it is objected that Christianity is not a perfect religious system, because its sacred records are insufficient for the guidance of mankind, it is necessary in answering this objection to take the Christian records as we find them, and to suppose them to be such as they claim to be. My argument is intended, not for those who do not believe Holy Scripture to be of God, but for those who are firmly persuaded that it is the revelation of His will, whose faith is little shaken by the difficulties which "the higher criticism" has raised, but who are at times sorely perplexed by this question as to the divisions of Christianity. My earnest desire is to point out to some of these the one true method of healing the divisions, and attaining that unity which will itself effectually answer the objections and taunts of the adversaries.

And yet to this objection of a free-thinker against our argument we might further reply by asking him, whether, if the argument can be at all maintained, it does not follow that the assumption that Holy Scripture

is the revelation of the divine mind is a legitimate assumption? For if he were called to explain why he is convinced that the laws by which nature is governed are uniform and persistent, he would reply probably that there is an intuitive persuasion in the mind that it must be so, and also the fact is established by induction, and all additional knowledge of nature is ever accumulating fresh proofs. Expressed in religious language the answer amounts to this, that the mind is intuitively conscious that the manifestations of Him from whom nature proceeds follow the same primary laws, because of the unity of Him who is the first cause of all. Conversely, we are assured that certain objects and phenomena are part of the same scheme of nature, merely because we trace in them the action of the same laws. A natural production will be with certainty thus distinguished from a work of human art, or from any accidental formation. Now if Holy Scripture can be treated in this respect as nature itself is treated; if in its history and teaching we find the same uniformity of law as we discover in the works of nature; if, for example, in those portions of its history in which superficial thinkers only see confusion—as unscientific observers imagine irregularities in nature—a careful examination discovers the same uniform principles working out their results to their maturity,—have we not in this the strongest possible internal evidence that the Christian Scriptures are a real manifestation of the divine mind?

But an objection may present itself from the opposite quarter. Is it not altogether a mistake to suppose that Holy Scripture, the inspired word of God can be like the natural world a subject for human reasonings? Is not this an irreverent handling of spiritual and super-

natural truth? is it not that presumptuous rationalism which leads many astray, and against which Scripture itself often warns us? And this objection takes two forms, which, hostile as they are to each other, really involve the same fundamental principle. One urges that because, for the reception of the spiritual truth which Holy Scripture reveals, higher powers are needed than human reason, because the natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God for they are spiritually received, therefore reasonings on the teaching of Scripture are not to be trusted. The other, from the premises that inferences drawn by human reason from Holy Scripture are uncertain, concludes that truth cannot be derived from Scripture except through the interpretation and under the guidance of the Church; that the value of Scripture, in short, is simply to illustrate and confirm the truth which the Church itself teaches.

But without discussing either of these forms in which the objection is presented, in the latter of which there is one fatal flaw—I mean, that we know nothing whatever of the extent or sphere of the authority of the Church except from Scripture itself—an answer may be given which will equally apply to both. It is not, I presume, intended by such an objection that conclusions, derived from Holy Scripture by legitimate processes of reasoning, will be opposed either to the true spiritual instincts of the enlightened mind, or to rightful decisions of the legitimate authority of the Church. No one would seriously maintain this, because it would make Holy Scripture, and the teaching of the Spirit given either to individuals or to the whole Church, contrary one to the other, which all would repudiate. The meaning of course is, that there is in Holy Scripture that which is out of the range of the understand-

ing, and which cannot be measured by the same rules, or discussed and examined by the same processes, as enable us to judge of the facts of the natural world. And if we attempt to speculate on these, or reduce them to the ordinary forms of human thought, or derive from them logical consequences, we only fall into error. The mysteries of the Godhead, and of the relations of God with man and human nature, including all the results of redemption, are subjects for faith, but not for knowledge of the same kind as that by which we apprehend natural things, and conclude by comparison necessary sequences of cause and effect. When men apply the speculative reason to the revealed doctrines of Trinity in Unity, of the atonement, of regeneration, or of justification; when they conclude from the unchangeableness of God that prayer is ineffectual, or from the truth of His predestination that man is no longer responsible,—they then rationalise in the bad sense of the word, because they apply the speculative reason to that to which its powers do not extend. For truth of this kind a higher faculty is required—one that judges of spiritual things, not by discourse of reason, but rather by intuitive perceptions, even as the æsthetic faculty judges of the beautiful in art or nature; and this inward perception is the result of our minds being cleared from prejudice and passion, and enlightened by the Spirit of Christ. But that conclusions from Holy Scripture are not to be trusted on those things that are within the limits, and therefore within the legitimate exercise, of human reason; that Scripture appears to the human mind to say one thing, and yet means another,—is either to charge God with being the author of delusion and falsehood, or else it is a playing at fast-and-loose with the faculties of man's understanding, which is fatal to

all certainty and all knowledge. We have no evidence for any truth in heaven and earth, if the powers of the human mind are not to be trusted in those things which are within their range. It is no irreverence, but an act of the deepest reverence, implying entire confidence in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, when we examine it with the conviction that we shall discover in it laws affecting human nature in all its highest relations, if only we search God's Word as diligently as others have studied His works; and, further, that legitimate conclusions from Scripture will need no testimony from without, but will shine in the light of their own divine truth.

There is one other objection—I should rather call it an antipathy—which I must expect will prevent many religiously-minded persons from even entering on the argument discussed in this work, and which I can hardly hope to remove by any preliminary remarks. There is a deeply-rooted feeling in many minds that Church questions, under any form, are unedifying; that, though they may be necessary and true, yet they are wholly of a different order from questions of faith and Christian duty. And certainly there is much to justify this feeling. A Church question treated controversially, maintained by arguments from Scripture, defended by precedents from the history of Christianity, confirmed by authorities from Christian writers of all ages, is probably the driest and most unsatisfying food that can be conceived both for the spirit and for the intellect. Unhappy is the lot of those whose spiritual pastor has become a zealous advocate of some ecclesiastical system, and who considers it his duty to labour in the unprofitable task of impressing his conscientious convictions on their minds. Must we not confess that

whether it be Bellarmine De Romano Pontifice, or Barrow on the Papal Supremacy, or Richard Baxter's Christian Ecclesiastics, or Milton on Prelatical Episcopacy; the most convincing proofs that "since the apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church," or an elaborate argument for the platform of Presbyterianism; we rise from the study of these learned treatises, perhaps with the deep impression that the evidence on our own side is unanswerable, and that those who will not receive it hardly deserve to be treated as brethren, but also with a shrewd suspicion that we ourselves are not much better Christians than we were before? But why is this? How can it be that truths, emanating, as we believe, from the mind of Christ, bring us no nearer to Him, but are mere notions without spiritual life in them? Is it not because we will not study them as He Himself has revealed them; as parts of His own living truth, as the result and expression of that divine wisdom which angels desire to look into? Ought not the knowledge of the true principles of the Church of Christ to direct us to a fuller and better understanding of the Gospel of Christ? I do not presume to hope that the present imperfect attempt to trace the laws of Christ's Church from their original source will afford the same satisfaction to the minds of others as it has supplied to my own. I am also aware that this argument wants much of the interest which it might possess if the doctrines of Christianity were more largely and freely interwoven with it, and if the inductive method of investigation, which I have thought necessary for the present work, were less rigorously followed. But whilst I must abstain from entering on purely doctrinal questions, further than may be necessary for the com-

pleteness of the argument, no one can fail to observe how closely the argument borders on many of those spiritual truths which are the life of the Christian soul, and how largely exact conclusions as to the questions here discussed will contribute to a right apprehension of those things with which faith alone has to deal.

And let those who shrink from such investigations, being content with their own conclusions, although they have never thoroughly tested them, on questions which seem to them at all events not vital to the soul, rouse themselves from this selfish apathy, and consider, not whether the subject is made interesting to them, not whether this book is one with which they may beguile a leisure half-hour, but what are the momentous issues at stake in these questions? Does Holy Scripture supply men with sufficient guidance as to the form and polity of Christianity—whether it has any true form or not—or does it not supply such guidance? And by sufficient, we mean such as nature supplies for the determination of its laws. If it must be answered that there is no such guidance, we have no reply whatever to offer to the objection which infidelity urges against Christianity as an imperfect revelation. The theory of an infallible Church cannot help us; it only renders the objection more difficult to remove. But if it be true that there is sufficient guidance in Scripture—if we may indeed determine thence with certainty, on questions which now are separating us, the will of God and the mind of Christ, if only we will lay aside our prejudices, and not be guided by mere feeling, but will patiently and diligently and impartially study the Word of God as others are studying His works,—then what a glorious future of the true union of Christendom is open before us!

FIRST PART

ANTE-MESSIANIC AGE

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CHAP.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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FIRST PART.

ANTE-MESSIANIC AGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A COMPLETE inquiry into the various forms of religious life which the Old Testament presents to our view not only is unnecessary here, but could only embarrass our argument; because the questions, what relation these forms hold to Christianity, whether they were completely abolished in order that a totally different condition of religious life might be introduced, or whether they contained elements which should reappear in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, could not be answered accurately until we had investigated the principles and laws of that kingdom. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to take a cursory view of the several types of human life in which, before the coming of Jesus Christ, revealed religion was manifested and embodied. These will, at all events, serve as a background against which the true form of the Church of Christ will appear more distinctly, whether by contrast or by comparison we cannot as yet determine. We must remember indeed that to minds educated under

these ancient forms of religious life, and trained by their influences, the teaching of Christ, and afterwards of His apostles, was first addressed. But without anticipating our inquiry into the nature of that teaching, we may observe that, although both Christ and His apostles appeal to the Old Testament in confirmation of their doctrine, yet in some minds the influences of the old system were certainly antagonistic to the new religious life; so that we may conclude, generally, that whilst the old forms were the embodiment of principles which were really in perfect harmony with Christ's Gospel, yet they are of a different order, and may appear to those who cannot distinguish the principles to be discordant.

The original religious organisations were, as we might expect, the simplest possible. We learn that, after the fall of man and the promise of the seed of the woman in whom the evils of the Fall should be remedied, the separation between the good and the evil, appearing first in the descendants of Seth and those of Cain, failed to maintain or develop itself in any forms of social or national life; it issued not in order but confusion; a disorganised world was overwhelmed by the Flood, and the family of Noah became the seed of a new world. Distinctions among the several branches of that family soon manifested themselves, and the attempt to attain an artificial and unreal unity, which would have been no true progress, but a hindrance to God's order, was confounded by divine interposition. In course of time Abram is selected as the father of a new and divine organisation, and receives the promise that in his seed all nations should be blessed. Of the sons of Abraham, Isaac is chosen; of the twin sons of Isaac, Jacob, as inheritor of the promises and

determining the line in which the blessings should be continued and fulfilled. In the family of Jacob the organisation receives a further development. His twelve sons become the heads of twelve divisions of Israel. One, Judah, is selected as the head of the first and leading tribe. The tribe of Levi is separated with the utmost distinctness for all purposes relating to religious service. In that tribe Aaron is chosen as the head and parent of the priesthood, his family being as definitely distinguished from the rest of the tribe as the tribe itself was set apart from the rest of Israel. Whilst however there were these definite distinctions, the unity of the nation was maintained by the unity of worship, the one sanctuary, the periodical festivals celebrated at one place; the tribes intermarried, yet without confusing the tribal distinctions of their descendants; and the sacerdotal tribe, scattered through the land in the Levitical cities instead of being collected as other tribes in one district, was a bond of religious unity to the people.

The law of organic life in these and other developments described in the Old Testament was succession by natural descent, which is indeed the natural principle of human society. And there are certain elements in such a law which give it great force in religious, as well as in other, organisations of mankind, and these are expressly recognised in Holy Scripture. A son naturally inherits his father's likeness: Adam begets a son in his own image. Moreover, the paternal authority — the natural *patria potestas* — has great power in forming and determining the character and conduct of the family. This indeed is expressly stated as the reason for the promise being given to Abraham and his seed after him: "For I know him

that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the thing that he hath spoken of him."* So that the succession through natural descent, both to religious blessings and to religious offices, has some real foundation in human nature, and is not merely artificial and arbitrary, as it is often represented. And it must be further noticed, that in the old dispensation this law is so to speak relieved, as it was in the constitution of archaic society, and as it still is among many uncivilised races, by the principle of selection among members of the same family being combined with that of natural descent. Seth was not the eldest son of Adam, nor Abram apparently of Terah, nor Isaac of Abraham, nor Jacob of Isaac, nor Judah of Jacob, nor certainly in every case the high priest of the sacerdotal family. In each family there was one who succeeded to the complete status of the father, and became in his turn the *paterfamilias;* but this was not necessarily the eldest born. The law of primogeniture does not appear to have been strictly followed in any of the religious organisations of the Old Testament.

We must observe further, that whilst the law of succession by natural descent was the one governing principle of these organisations, there were many indications of the imperfection and inadequacy of this law, which was adopted for a special purpose, and for a time, until the true kingdom of God should appear amongst men. Melchisedec, not of the seed of Abraham, was a priest of the most high God and blessed the patriarch, and in him (as is argued in the Epistle to the Hebrews) all that should come of him by natural

* Gen. xviii. 19.

descent. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, "took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."* Balaam, wholly outside the religious organisation of Israel, is found offering sacrifices to the true God, who reveals Himself and the future destinies of His chosen people to this alien from the covenant. Job was of the race of Edom, of which it was said—"Jacob have I blessed, and Esau have I cursed." It is impossible therefore to suppose that the religious organisations of the Old Testament, which were founded on the natural law of succession, either did contain, or were intended to contain, or were capable of containing, all the religious life of man. Indeed in Israel itself there was a remarkable testimony to the inherent imperfection of the sacerdotal organisation, and to its inadequacy as a representation of the true principle of a divine ministry, in the rise and progress of the order of prophets. Taken from all the tribes without distinction, the prophets asserted the spiritual principles of the law, not only by their teaching, but also by their acts—for example, by offering sacrifice—though not of Aaron's seed. Among the prophets themselves, from the time of Samuel we find in the schools of the prophets some indications of an organisation, indistinct and interrupted indeed, but a faint foreshadowing of an organisation for the service of God on a principle different from that of natural descent.

After the institution of the Levitical priesthood, the next national development, for which the judges raised up from time to time prepared the way, was the selection of David of the tribe of Judah—again it must be

* Exod. xviii. 12.

observed the youngest of his own family—as the king of the nation and the father of a royal race. This was followed by a rapid and very extensive growth of the organic religious life of the people; the theocratic kingdom, which even in the days of David became of great power and dimensions, in the days of his son Solomon attained its maturity, the temple built by him being at the same time the symbol and the centre of the national religious life. The extent and elaborate exactness of the religious organisation which David began and Solomon completed are described in detail by the writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles.

No sooner however had this religious organisation been perfected than signs of decay appeared, issuing shortly in violent disruptions and disorders. The separation of the ten tribes of Israel from Judah and the house of David was no development, but was a fatal injury to the religious life of the people, which in the separated part rapidly degenerated; whilst the divided nation, after a series of accumulated misfortunes, fell into subjection to foreign powers, from which it never recovered. But, as another proof how inadequate the religious organisation was to represent the true religious life of man, we may notice in the sacred history that separated Israel at times contained more of the true servants of God than Judah, who possessed the temple and sacerdotal services at Jerusalem, the very centre and heart of the system.

Notwithstanding however all its imperfections, and in spite of all external assaults, and all elements of dissolution within, this divinely-ordained organisation continued until the coming of Jesus Christ, foretold by prophecy as the rod out of the stem of Jesse, the branch that should grow of his roots. Prophecy indeed, from

the beginning, pointed forward to a condition of man for which all these imperfect forms of religious life were making preparation. The covenant with Abraham was in its very nature national; yet its promises and blessings were to be for all nations. The prophets used language, little understood indeed before the times of the Gospel, which expressly declared that in some form or other the divinely-ordained types of religious life should be perpetuated through all generations. The seed of Abraham was to possess the land for ever. The covenant with David, and with the priests and Levites, is as immutable as the covenant of day and night, the laws of the physical world. In every age they should have their true representatives and successors. And especially, and with much distinctness of detail, was it predicted that the kingdom of David should never fail, but should have dominion over the whole earth and all nations. It should be governed by the promised Messiah, the divine King, the Lord our Righteousness. It should be as a stone hewn without hands, a supernatural and divine empire, which should break in pieces the kingdoms of this world, and become a great mountain and endure for ever.

It would be out of place to discuss the interpretation of these prophecies, since this can only be determined accurately from events the nature of which, when the prophecies were delivered, were hidden in the womb of time. There is indeed one question, at the very threshold of such an inquiry, which would have to be determined—I mean whether the law of succession by natural descent, of the insufficiency and inherent unspirituality of which so many indications are given in the Old Testament, would be the principle on which these prophecies should receive their accomplishment. It is

assumed by Jews, and by many Christians also when they would interpret prophecy, that this is the only true law of succession. The New Testament however, without interfering with those elements of reality which that law contains, does, we shall find, substitute for it another principle of succession, and places on a very different basis the religious organisation of mankind.

This law of natural succession however, which determined the forms of religious life in the old economy, was in reality only the expression of another larger natural principle which those forms embodied—I mean the authority of positive law.

The history of archaic law among the nations of the world has been discussed in a modern work, with which all students of the subject are familiar. The primeval form of law, among the Greeks at least, consisted in isolated judgments of kings, which were supposed to emanate from heaven, and are therefore called by Homer *themistes*, as being suggested by *Themis* the assessor and messenger of Zeus. These judicial awards were not connected by any principle, or founded on any custom or usage, but were regarded simply as expressions of the divine will, and by their recurrence under certain circumstances established precedents and usages, which then became the authoritative standard of justice. These usages gradually grew into unwritten laws, preserved in the custody of a privileged class. The next epoch in the history of law was the era of codes, of which the Twelve Tables of Rome were the most famous specimen,—some of these codes, as the Hindoo laws of Manu, being regarded as composed under divine inspiration. In all, religious civil and moral ordinances were mingled together without distinction, "the severance of law from morality, and

religion from law belonging to the later stages of mental progress." In these codes law proper, νόμος, as distinguished both from δική and from θέμις, began.*

The history of law among God's ancient people has several strong points of resemblance to that which has been traced among other nations of mankind. But a fundamental element in the constitution of man is affirmed and expounded in Holy Writ, which is very faintly and partially recognised in other ancient records. In Scripture man is represented as having in himself the knowledge of good and evil; this knowledge however, far from being an unmixed blessing, brings death to him instead of life, having been acquired through disobedience to a positive command of God. For the awakening of conscience was both preceded and followed by the excitement of passion or concupiscence, the desire for the forbidden thing. This representation of man, which must be the foundation of all true moral philosophy, alone explains his condition and history, as it is further described in the Old Testament. His consciousness of right and wrong, awakened in his own fall, yet obscured or perverted by passion, is at first guided, corrected, or warned by separate divine commands, in some respects answering to the Homeric idea of *themistes*, and by customs and usages growing out of these. But the law in its true sense began when the Ten Commandments were proclaimed to the nation from Mount Sinai by the voice of God, and written on tables of stone by the finger of God, detailed rules for the social moral and religious life of Israel being given to Moses, and recorded by him in the books of the law. The religious organisation of Israel was the offspring and the expression of this divine law.

* Maine's Ancient Law, chap. i.

Now the characteristic of law is, that it derives its force from the authority of the lawgiver. It may be obviously just and good, or the reasons for its enactment may be hidden in the breast of its author, but it must be obeyed because it is law. The law of the living and true God had His authority, and it was sufficient that He had commanded it. Its language was, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The Israelite who ventured to worship God otherwise than as He had ordained, is visited with His judgment. To obey is better than sacrifice. He who stretched out an unconsecrated hand to touch the sacred ark, though to save it from falling, is smitten for his rashness, and dies there before God. The distinct purpose of the economy is to assert the right of God to the obedience of man, not because of the apparent fitness and goodness of the command, but because the commandment has been given. It is the teaching of the Garden of Eden fully developed and applied to all relations of human life. And its result was the repetition of the same fall.

And we must further observe, that in some important respects divine law differs not essentially from human. When we pass, in the history either of the world at large or of the chosen people, from the era of isolated judgments on separate circumstances to that of fixed law, written and promulgated, we come undoubtedly to a higher stage of man's existence. Without definite and permanent law, natural life cannot make progress, and law is law indeed in proportion to its definiteness, its certainty, its rigidity. And yet these very qualities in law, without which it cannot attain its perfectness as law—because otherwise its re-

sults must in part depend on its interpretation by a judge, as is the case with most human laws—are also the inherent defect of law itself, giving occasion for the saying, *Summum jus summa injuria.* For it is impossible that any fixed rules should be at all times suited to all the varying circumstances and conditions of human life, in which the self-same acts may at different times be wholly different in their true character. And laws may therefore both allow some things and command others, necessary or expedient in one stage of human life, yet in another injurious or very inexpedient; so that human laws made in one age often fall into desuetude in another, and their enforcement would lead to great injustice, and they need to be from time to time reformed and adapted to the altered circumstances of men. It is therefore impossible, in the nature of things, that institutions which are the expression of positive and fixed law, although that law be given by God Himself, should be perfectly adapted for man or be permanent. And those who live under such institutions are in an imperfect state for two reasons: first, because their own judgment is not exercised in their obedience, but they obey merely because it is commanded, which is the condition of an infant or a slave; and then also because of the imperfections which are necessarily inherent in law because it is law.

These imperfections of a state of law are of consequence, however, only as regards the moral and religious life of man. In respect to his civil and political rights such defects are far more than counterbalanced by the immense advantage which man derives in all temporal matters from the definiteness and fixity of law. But for man, as a moral and spiritual being, a

state of law must ever be a state of bondage and of imperfectness. The evils incident to those who are under law were relieved in the old economy by a gradual and partial revelation of another and a higher economy for man. The office of the prophets was specially intended to awaken and direct the consciences of men, and teach them the justice truth and goodness of God by arguments independent of the law, so as to place obedience to God on a better and surer foundation than that of submission to bare authority, and produce a service of a higher order, whilst it pointed forward to the coming kingdom in which all the defects of a state of law should be completely remedied. From time to time also there were significant hints of a fulfilment of the law, not in the letter but in the spirit, as when David entered into the house of God, and ate the consecrated bread which it was not lawful for any to eat except the priests only. And why was Uzzah slain, and David's breach of order quoted by Jesus Christ Himself as an argument against the legalists of His day? The words of David himself in one of his Psalms express the principle, superior to mere law, which was subsequently to be developed under the Gospel of Jesus Christ; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The knowledge of good and evil, which to man under the dominion of sinful passion is death, is to become a higher law than the law itself, a law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which sets us free from the law of sin and death.

CHAPTER II.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE position occupied by John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ, was one of transition between the Old Testament and the New. Being of a priestly family, of parents who "walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless," he was intimately related to the old ecclesiastical organisation, and he was brought up from his youth by divine command in the strictest observance of those religious ordinances which would prepare him to sympathise with the spirit of the old economy. On the other hand, he was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb," and was not only a priest, but a prophet, greater than any that had preceded him. And he is said to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, who, it must be remembered, was in no way connected with the Mosaic economy, having been raised up among the ten tribes to testify against their idolatry and other sins; nor does Elijah's history or teaching contain any allusion to the priesthood, or to the Temple at Jerusalem, or to the law of Moses. Carmel was his holy mountain, where he, a Gileadite, offered sacrifice to the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, a sacrifice kindled by fire from heaven as the proof of its acceptance. But John, though a son of the Temple, was sent to fulfil Elijah's mission far

more perfectly than the old prophet could have accomplished it, and to express more distinctly and emphatically than all the prophets the inner spirit of the divine law. To understand however the true bearing of John's ministry on the question before us, we must keep in mind what was the popular belief and general expectation of the Jews as to the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. The truth that the succession to the blessings of the covenant would be not by natural descent, but on some higher principle, although foreshadowed by some of the ancient prophets, yet was never realised by the Jewish mind. Proselytes indeed were admitted by certain rites, of which baptism was one, to some of the religious privileges of the chosen people; in the words of one of the Old Testament historians, they became Jews. They were received as adopted sons into the family to which Jews belonged as sons by birth. That the kingdom of God was the inheritance of the sons of Abraham, and that they were entitled to this kingdom because of their descent, was doubted by none. That notorious sinners, publicans and harlots, forfeited the blessings of the covenant although they were of the seed of Israel, was only the exception that confirmed the general law that for Gentiles and Samaritans the outer darkness was prepared, for Israel the blessings and triumphs of the kingdom. Now we must observe that John the Baptist, coming to publish the near approach of the glorious kingdom which for centuries had been the hope of the nation, proclaimed a totally different principle of admission into the kingdom from that which before had been accepted as certain. He declared to all without exception the necessity, not merely of righteousness or holiness, but of repent-

ance—μετάνοια, a change of mind. The right by hereditary succession is swept away by that one word, and a new standard, moral and spiritual, is substituted. He summons all without exception to the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; the children of Abraham, Hebrews of the purest descent, the strictest observers of the law, need to be "proselytes" in order to be prepared for the kingdom, just as much as the unclean Gentiles. He requires them also not only to come to him and be baptised acknowledging their sins, but to prove the reality of their confession by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. "And think not," he adds, "to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father; for I say unto you that God is able from these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree; therefore every tree, not bringing forth good fruit, is being cut off and cast into the fire."

We are now so familiar with the truths here proclaimed, expounded as they are to us by the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles, that we forget how new they were to the minds of those who had been trained under the Jewish economy; how different in their fundamental idea from the law of succession by birthright on which the old religious organisation was founded. They explain the words of Jesus Christ, when He said that the law and the prophets prophesied until John, but since the days of John the Baptist a violence, a new power not before known or thought necessary, was required for the possession of the kingdom of heaven. It was not merely that the Baptist declared more distinctly and fully than the law and the prophets that the privileges of the covenant were of no avail except men served and pleased God. This

may be gathered from the Old Testament, however the unspiritual teachers of the Jews might deny or obscure the truth, as conclusively as from the New. But the Baptist in his teaching, and yet more conspicuously by his baptism, taught much more than this, namely, that the first principle of the kingdom to be manifested on the earth, of that kingdom in which all the promises to Israel should be fulfilled, was a moral and spiritual state, summed up by him in the one word μετάνοια, by the fruits of which, and by no hereditary claims, the standing of a man in that kingdom should be determined.

Nor did John's testimony rest here. As the immediate forerunner of Jesus Christ, he directed men to Him as the promised Messiah, in whom the law and the prophets should be fulfilled, and as possessing the spiritual power to give to men that of which John himself could only teach the necessity. "I," he says, "baptise you in water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is more powerful than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptise you in the Holy Spirit and fire. Whose winnowing-fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His thrashing-floor, and shall gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire."

The force of this teaching of the Baptist is much weakened by our thinking of it as only foretelling some final judgment, instead of declaring, as it was obviously intended to declare, the immediate results of Christ's work. The full meaning of the language indeed, and what distinctions have to be drawn, will only appear when we pass on to the teaching of Christ Himself. But we must observe that John the Baptist here proclaims truths which the last of the Old Testament

prophets expressed in other language, when he foretold that the Lord should suddenly come to His temple, and should be like a refiner's fire, to purify the sons of Levi that they might offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. And that the offering of Judah and Jerusalem should then be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in the golden age of Israel. If, I say, we apply to the language of Malachi the new principle enunciated by John, that the law of succession in the kingdom of heaven was not that of natural descent, but one of a higher order altogether, then the closing prophecy of the old economy becomes an anticipation of the ministry of the Baptist.

The office of John indeed was rather to clear away that which was old and falling to ruin, than to build up that which was new. He taught that the coming kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom; that the shadows should be turned into realities; that in the kingdom of the Christ there would be the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and a process of separation of the evil from the good, which should terminate in the final elimination and destruction of all that is not the real fruit of the kingdom. In what forms this kingdom should be manifested on the earth, it was not his office to declare. Whether, for the fulfilment of the divine purposes, there should be an organisation developed out of the spiritual principles of the kingdom, in which for a time the chaff should grow with the wheat, his words do not determine. And yet this might be inferred from his language unless the final judgment should immediately follow; for how could the wheat be produced, except by a growth in which it is not separated from the chaff, and cannot be, until it be ripened? And what was the meaning of this outward rite of baptism, if the spiritual

principles which he taught were not to be embodied in some outward and visible form, which should testify to those new truths which the forms of the old law could not represent or contain? A preacher of abstract truths as to righteousness and judgment to come needs not a mere ceremony. If John had been no more than an Elijah protesting against ungodliness and impenitence, and not the forerunner of a kingdom into which men should be visibly gathered, why should he confuse the minds of men by adding an outward rite to his spiritual words? And when we consider further, that this very rite was so essential and conspicuous a part of his ministry, that from it is derived his significant and distinctive title of the Baptist, and that his whole work is summed up by Christ Himself as the Baptism of John, we might conclude with some confidence, that the coming kingdom itself would not be a mere philosophy, or system of doctrine, in which no visible form or representation would be necessary. And such an inference would be confirmed by our observing, that the form in which repentance, the first spiritual element of the kingdom of heaven, is visibly represented, is not some ordinance of the old law, a remnant of the Mosaic economy adhering for a time to the new teaching, but a symbol selected by the greatest of the prophets to express new truths. It was indeed the symbolical act which afterwards became the elementary rite of the kingdom itself, out of which its complete bodily form should be in time developed.

Do we ask, why this particular rite is taken as the visible representation of the new life? why baptism together with repentance stands thus, in the ministry of the forerunner of Jesus Christ, at the entrance of the kingdom of heaven? Undoubtedly baptism had been

recognised already in the minds of men, as a suitable symbol of a complete change of state and character, and its spiritual significance was afterwards expounded both by Jesus Christ and His apostles. Yet we must not expect to be able fully to explain the relation between the outward form and the spirit which it embodies. Such a question nearly resembles that of the relation between mind and matter. Although we may seem to discern certain reasons from analogy, which at least serve to fix the connection in our minds, yet the solution of the question lies as much out of the range of human knowledge, as the causes why the bodily form of man is the appropriate and necessary expression of his mental and spiritual being. Only let us remember that the teaching of the Baptist also declares that the body without the spirit is dead.

SECOND PART

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SECOND PART.

ACTS AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THE first act of Jesus, in entering on His public life and going forth into the world to lay the foundations of His kingdom, is to present Himself before the Baptist to receive from him that rite in which the first spiritual principle of the new kingdom was represented. The Baptist expresses his surprise that One, immeasurably his superior, from whom he a sinful man needed to receive the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, should come to him to be baptised. But Jesus comes, as the Head of His own kingdom and identified with it, the representative of those who should be gathered into it, to fulfil all righteousness. He had no sins of His own to confess and to be forgiven, but they had. And now that He is going forth to that work and ministry in which His Church shall follow Him, He must first, by His own baptism, consecrate the rite out of which the body shall grow, and be in every sense the first-born among many brethren. And when

He had been baptised and came up out of the water, straightway the heaven above Him is opened, and the Spirit came down in a bodily form, and rested upon Him, and "lo! a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus the kingdom of grace for man and the gift of the Holy Ghost begin, in Jesus Christ Himself, in an outward and visible rite with appropriate symbols.

Being now consecrated and set apart for His high office by the authority of God, Jesus Christ is led into the wilderness by the Spirit whom He received in His baptism, in order that through a period of temptation He may be further qualified for the fulfilment of His office, and thenceforward the ministry to which He is appointed commences. The beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ is described in the same words as are used of the ministry of the Baptist. He took up the theme of His forerunner, and preached saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And He not only baptised those who came to Him, but also, as an indication from the first that His own work was not like John's temporary, but would be perpetuated in the ministry of others, He committed to His own disciples the office of baptising. His kingdom at once begins to grow and expand itself. And He further proved His superiority to John and His own independent authority, not only by the new supernatural powers which He exercises, but also in His teaching. The Sermon on the Mount, which astonished all by the self-contained authority with which this new Teacher spoke, is the expansion of those spiritual principles of the kingdom, of which John only taught the first rudiments in the baptism of repentance. It is indeed still the most comprehensive and complete summary of the elementary

truths out of which the kingdom of heaven should grow from its birth to its maturity. The necessity of the *metanoia*, into which John baptised, Jesus proved by showing that all the blessings of the kingdom are received by those alone who are spiritually qualified for them. Of these spiritual conditions, the first, poverty of spirit, a consciousness of spiritual destitution and helplessness, is the key-note of the really evangelical spirit under all its varied forms. The beatitudes reach their climax, not in the favour and approbation of the world, which those who are so highly qualified might be expected to win for themselves, but in persecution, in the reproaches and misrepresentations of men. By these His disciples would be proved to be real successors of the prophets, and would gain the rewards of the kingdom of heaven.

Having marked out the several elements of the spiritual mind which is the Spirit of the kingdom of heaven, He proceeds to describe the development of the kingdom itself in the world. His disciples are the salt of the earth, the inner spiritual life already described being obviously the savour of the salt which resists corruption. But it must be observed that the words imply a state to which qualities legitimately belong, the absence of the qualities not disannulling the state, but making it valueless for the purposes for which it is constituted. For salt without savour is still salt. The next illustration expands the truth. "Ye are the light of the world." But this cannot be except by an external manifestation of the light, and by means and agencies suited for the purpose. And that this is the meaning of our divine Master appears from the words that follow, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." There is therefore a city, a πόλις with

its polity, an organised community, and that not in some lowly valley, where the blessings and rights of the heavenly kingdom may be enjoyed in peace by its members, but built on a mountain, conspicuous to the world as the visible representation of the kingdom of heaven. And the truth here affirmed is not—as many seem to imagine—merely that Christ's disciples *ought* not to conceal the truth, but that as the constitution and position of the Christian society would be such as in the nature of things to make it seen and known of all men, therefore the duty of its members would be to make the light of which it is the guardian apparent to all. And, if a lamp is lighted, it is of little use unless it be placed upon the lamp-stand to shine forth to all who are in the house. This is undoubtedly a practical lesson to the disciples of Christ, that to make their light of its full value to the world, it must be set in the framework, which should be appointed for the purpose of holding forth and manifesting the light. But it seems, from the context, that the illustration was primarily intended as the explanation of that which was then present to the mind of the divine Teacher. Why was there to be a city set on a hill? Why does the spiritual truth, which Jesus Christ reveals, need a polity, an organised society, to manifest it to the world? Because, having kindled the light of life, He knows that a candlestick is necessary that it may become the light of the world. And thence the practical conclusion, applicable to all His disciples, is deduced.

But what relation shall this new kingdom hold to the economy which has preceded, ordained by God Himself, established by His law, and expounded by His prophets? This question, to which Jesus Christ gives all the reply that was possible until His own acts of

redemption should supply the complete solution, occupies in its several ramifications almost the whole discourse. How fundamental the question is to the argument in which we are engaged will appear as this argument proceeds.

First of all, Jesus begins by asserting the true permanency of the law, and its exact and complete fulfilment in the kingdom of heaven. But this fulfilment would be a righteousness far beyond any that Scribes and Pharisees had conceived in their scrupulous and rigid observances of the letter. The law is to be accomplished by human life being brought into a higher sphere than that of law, by enabling men to serve God, not through an obedience to rules because of the authority which pronounced them, but by their being the children of their Father which is in heaven, and of the same spirit with Him who gave the law. Jesus Christ proves the inherent imperfection of law by several instances. In some this is apparent in the insufficiency of the prohibition of an act, when words, thoughts, and even looks involve the same evil. In one case, a direction in the law as to divorce, which was intended at the first not to encourage, but to restrain, the practice among the Israelites, and thus to strengthen the marriage-bond not to weaken it, yet sanctioning or at all events not prohibiting a liberty inconsistent with the original institution of marriage, was utterly unsuitable as a perpetual law of human life, however necessary for a certain condition of the Jewish nation. Again, as regards oaths, the law requires them on certain occasions, and only forbids false swearing; whereas the same spirit of reverence that would prevent a man from perjuring himself, would also restrain him from many expressions in his ordinary talk, which yet no positive

law could reach. And generally the law demands exact justice between man and man, and yet the readiness to bear wrong and to submit to injustice is the true spirit of the children of God.

In all this, we must observe, Jesus Christ is not substituting another set of rules for those which before had been given by Moses. He is proving the insufficiency of all laws, as mere rules to be obeyed on the ground of the authority of the lawgiver. He is teaching spiritual principles, not propounding new laws, and He indicates distinctly what the living principle of all obedience must be, the love of God and of man, in which the whole law is fulfilled. This living power not only reaches further than any positive law can extend, but also produces a more complete and real conformity to those divine institutions, such as marriage, which are not of the same nature as law, but were antecedent to it, and are assumed in it, belonging to man's original constitution as created of God.

The great truth here expounded by Jesus Christ, being the foundation of all Christian ethics, must therefore be also the foundation of those relations between man and man which determine the fellowship of His disciples; in other words, of that visible polity for manifesting His truth, of which He had before spoken. Whatever the organisation shall be, which shall represent His kingdom, it must not be, like the old religious organisations, the expression of positive law but of a higher principle. The new polity must be of the same order as the new moral and spiritual state; even as the old polity embodied the old life. Yet this by no means implies, as some hastily conclude, that because the Christian polity is not governed by positive law, therefore there are no divinely-authorised institutions

and ordinances in the organisation. There may be, as the primeval ordinance of the union of man and woman in marriage sufficiently proves, a divine order not dependent on positive law, not deriving thence the reasons for its perpetuity, but arising out of the actual constitution of human nature, and of the necessary relations of man to God and to his brother men.

That Jesus Christ enunciated principles, instead of making rules, is sufficiently obvious from one notable feature of His teaching,—I mean the boldness with which two antithetical truths are asserted without any attempt to reconcile them, or to explain the seeming contradiction. Such opposition would be fatal to the distinctness of law, which has value only as it is definite and free from uncertainty; but for the illustration of principles, the effects of which in human life have to be isolated in order that they may be distinguished, these apparent contrarieties are expedient and indeed necessary. That such antinomies or antithetical propositions, having their unity in one fundamental idea, are necessary to the complete knowledge of all truth, and are required by the nature of thought and its laws, is well known to all students of the philosophy of the human mind; but it would be beside our purpose to do more than notice that such antitheses occur continually in the teaching of Jesus Christ, and mislead those who are spiritually dull of understanding. One opposition of this nature in the discourse serves to illustrate the whole argument. In a former passage the duty of publicity had been expressly enforced. "As men place a candle on its candlestick, that it may give light to all, so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify God." But now, in the contrast between the evangel-

ical and the legal service of God, the rule seems to be reversed. "Take heed not to do your righteousness before men, in order to be seen of them." Alms must be given not only without ostentation, but without self-conscious reflection on our own act, and simply as the spontaneous fruit of a merciful heart. Prayer is not for public display; it must be the hidden communing with God of the soul which hungers and thirsts for His righteousness. Fasting is not to be an outward manifestation of self-denial and humiliation. On the contrary, visible signs of mortification must be avoided, and those that mourn must be as though they mourned not.

In all these directions, it is again obvious that Jesus Christ simply taught principles. The desire for human praise, and the desire for God's glory, may produce the same outward acts, but the one vitiates, the other ennobles them all. There is, however, another distinction to be noticed between the publicity which He commands and that which He condemns. That which is to be avoided, purposely and expressly, is the bringing into the gaze of the world a man's own self; which appears to be indicated occasionally in the language: "When *thou* givest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;" "when *thou* prayest enter into thy closet;" "when *thou* fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face." The personal religious life is that of which Jesus Christ here speaks; and this is one of privacy, "a life hid with Christ in God," shrinking from exposure before the eyes of men just in proportion as it is real. But the corporate religious life of Christ's disciples cannot be other than public; for the city is set on a hill. Its ministries of mercy, its worship, its seasons of humiliation, are public testimonies

to the world of the faith, love, and obedience of the saints, and in them, though the personal religious life is always the savour of the salt, yet Christ is seen not the individual. Thus what we may call by anticipation church-life, and personal life, are set one over against the other, and are necessary each to the other: the former being the legitimate and suitable sphere for the publicity by which God is glorified; the other for the privacy in which the true righteousness of the law and the prophets is fulfilled.

This portion of the discourse deals chiefly, as might be expected in this stage of our Lord's teaching, with the personal religious life. But the form of prayer which He gave to His disciples cannot be thus limited. The address, "Our Father which art in heaven," suggests indeed that even in private the disciple must pray as a member of the family, that in his most secret retirement his relation to the whole body of disciples must be present to his mind as the ground for his own communion with God. The use however of the plural number throughout the prayer, and the breadth, generality, and comprehensiveness of the petitions point rather to public and united worship than to private devotion. We cannot doubt that Jesus Christ here gives the elementary principles of the common worship of His Church; for it is more consistent with the character of Christ's teaching, as supplying the principles rather than the rules of Christian life, to regard this prayer as the standard and, so to speak, the parent of all Christian worship, and not merely as a form to be occasionally used. It thus authorises, even if it does not direct, the use in His Church of liturgical forms. The absence of a form indeed ever tends to make prayer personal and individual, rather than a common

and corporate act. This form of prayer also suggests much as to the nature and purposes, the method and order, of the worship of God in the kingdom of heaven. To consider these here however would carry us out of the course of our present inquiry.

The discourse then passes to another branch of the question as to the fulfilment of the law, and teaches that the unreserved uncalculating dedication of the life to God is necessary. From this Jesus Christ proceeds to expound the true fulfilment of the law and the prophets in our relations with our brethren; and here, as we might confidently expect, we find principles, which are primary and fundamental laws of that fellowship of Christ's disciples, that corporate citizen life, by which the kingdom of heaven is to be visibly represented to the world.

These principles, which, we shall hereafter find, pervade the whole organic life of Christianity, are according to the manner of our Lord's teaching enunciated antithetically. Each is asserted in its fulness without reservation or exception: each must be received as a living power, not balanced one against the other, as if they were contrary one to the other.

The first is necessary in order that fellowship among Christ's disciples may be possible. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Therefore the law of union in the "city," in the corporate life of Christ's people, cannot be, and never was intended to be, our several judgments on the spiritual character of others: to make this the basis of communion would not merely be uncharitable, it would be fatal to all such fellowship. Because, as He shows, judgment is reciprocated, and each is liable to judge himself partially and others severely. Let each rather judge himself, and then he will be able

to direct and assist others in their conflicts with evil. Certain therefore as it is that the kingdom of heaven is only for those who are spiritually entitled to its blessings, yet it belongs not to us to judge who are so entitled. A society embracing all who profess faith and repentance, not confined to those who are judged by their brethren to possess them, is the true Christian society which Jesus Christ Himself contemplates as His kingdom.

But over against this is set another principle, not contrary to it, though its opposite. "Give not," He says, "the holy thing to the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them with their feet, and turn and rend you." If it is necessary for the very existence of the Christian society not to judge others, it is also essential for the protection of those interests of which the society is the guardian in some cases to pass judgment. The necessity arises from two causes. First in order to avoid the profanation of that which is holy. "The holy thing" in the language of the law was the consecrated food which no one ceremonially defiled might eat. To give it to dogs would be the very height of profanity and impiety. Whatever might be the corresponding irreverence in Christ's new law, whoever those might be to whose charge "the holy thing" might be intrusted, it is at all events clear that for the purpose of preventing such profanation judgment must be exercised.

Further, pearls must not be cast before swine, both because the most precious jewels would be despised by the brute beasts without knowledge, only desiring to satisfy gross appetites, and because, irritated by having pearls given them instead of their natural food, they

would turn on us in anger instead of accepting gratefully the precious treasure. Here the necessity for judgment arises from the injury which the kingdom would suffer, partly from the foolish waste in offering its jewels to those who are utterly unsuited for them, and partly from the angry passions of unspiritual men, which are only excited the more by blessings unappreciated by the carnal mind. And here also judgment must be exercised, yet the judgment itself is the truest charity. Thus in the union of the largest charity for others with a reverential fear of God, and with the wise discrimination that seeks the good not the injury of men, the fellowship of Christ's disciples finds the standard and the limitations necessary both for its existence and for its acts of discipline.

Shall it be said that principles like these are not sufficiently definite? that they do not, like the directions given in the law, by which the clean and unclean might be distinguished with certainty, clearly and infallibly mark out the path of Christian duty? that all this implies unusual wisdom and discretion, and that, without these, toleration will readily degenerate into profane laxity, and vigilance against evil into judging others uncharitably? True, but in all the relations of the Christian life it must be so; the spirit, not the letter, must be the law. Wisdom is undoubtedly necessary in the fellowship of Christ's disciples; but "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask and it shall be given." God Himself gives without judging, without respect of persons; all who call on the name of the Lord are heard of Him. And yet He does not bestow gifts that will be abused, or that will be useless or injurious.

So then the fundamental law, the spirit of which

must pervade and direct all our relations with men, is simply this: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you; so also do ye to them." Have their interests in your view, as if they were your own. Judge them not, as you would not be judged by them. But when God's honour demands it, when the welfare of His Church makes it necessary, if to you the sanctities and treasures of the kingdom are committed in charge, then love both to God and man requires that you should judge. And this love is the sum both of the law and of the prophets.

In conclusion this divine sermon warns against the unrealities which would shelter themselves under the shadow of the kingdom, and makes the meaning of the principles thus far enunciated yet more apparent.

First, generally, however tolerant we ought to be of others, and however we may be freed in the kingdom of heaven from the bondage of law, still the truth remains, to be proved by terrible experience in the future history of the kingdom, that broad is the gate and wide the road that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; and that strait is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it. The comprehensiveness of Christ's Church is founded on another principle from that with which it is often confounded, an allowance of evil or falsehood.

The dangers arising from the present state of the kingdom are twofold, and demand different action. On the one hand, there would arise false prophets, teachers of falsehood, coming in sheep's clothing but inwardly ravening wolves. Here judgment must be exercised or the souls of men will be imperilled. How must the falsehood of the prophesying be detected under any garb

however plausible? Our Lord gives a comprehensive answer to this question, sufficient for the present. He supplies His disciples with one simple test, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Such as the fruit is, such the tree must be. But how can this be a sufficient test, when the plausibleness of the false doctrine arises from the garb of sanctity in which it clothes itself, from ministers of Satan appearing in the form of ministers of righteousness? This difficulty would indeed be insuperable, did not the teaching of Jesus Christ, marking out clearly what are, and what are not, the principles of the kingdom of heaven, supply the solution. That is false teaching, however it may seem to be authenticated, which produces or tends to produce, in the lives and characters of men, results at variance with those on which in this Sermon on the Mount He has pronounced His blessing.

It must be observed however, that whilst the truth or falsehood of teaching is to be determined from its fruits, and therefore this is a case in which judgment must be exercised, it does not therefore follow that every disciple is a competent judge, or that the united judgment of many has not more force than the conclusions of one. Nor, because each man is responsible for his own judgment within the sphere of his own personal responsibilities, does that constitute him a judge for others. The only question here decided is the rule of judgment. To whom the office of judging belongs, whether in the polity of the city there shall be officers for the exercise of judgment in the several cases for which it is needed, are questions the solution of which we must seek in the subsequent teaching of Jesus Christ. To conclude from these directions addressed to the whole body of disciples, that every

member of that body has the same function of judging false doctrine, is to assume the whole question.

On the other hand there will be, from the necessary constitution of Christ's kingdom on earth, not only false prophets but false disciples, and these very many, who will deceive not others only but even themselves. These however will not be judged here but hereafter. They will confess Jesus Christ to be Lord, will prophesy in His name,—not as false prophets but as true,—in His name cast out unclean spirits from men, and do many wonderful works, they will have authority and power in His Church, and yet be rejected by Him at the last. These do not really enter into the kingdom of heaven, whatever office they may hold in the society which represents that kingdom. Jesus Christ compares the real and unreal Christian to men building a house. The one builds on a rock, the other on the shifting sands. The figure of building on a rock occurs not unfrequently in the subsequent teaching of Christ and of His apostles. As regards a man's own life—(it must be noticed that the question of teaching is not here introduced)—no one builds on the rock, except by doing these sayings of Jesus Christ, by practical obedience to the standard of righteousness which the Sermon on the Mount expounds.

We find then, throughout this most comprehensive exposition of the principles of the kingdom of heaven, these two parts distinctly recognised, the inward spirit and the visible form: the latter necessary to embody and represent the spirit, but without the spirit useless for the purposes for which it is instituted, and only a refuge for fatal hypocrisy.

That the doctrine of Jesus Christ, enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount and doubtless in many similar

discourses, would soon begin to produce practical results among His disciples, such as would distinguish them from the devout and religious men of the Jewish economy, we might confidently predict. An incident which occurred at an early period of Christ's ministry indicates, that the new form of religious life among His disciples, a life, according to His teaching, governed not by rules but by principles, soon excited comment. It was noticed that whilst not only those who were instructed by the Pharisees but also the disciples of the Baptist fasted often, the disciples of Jesus Christ observed no religious fasts. Some both of the Pharisees and of John's disciples asked Jesus the reason of this apparent laxity. It was difficult for minds trained in the discipline of the old economy to conceive of any holiness and devotion without a strict and severe observance of rules of abstinence. The answer given by Christ marks out some essential differences between the religious life of the kingdom and that which had grown up under the old law. He first justifies His disciples on the ground that their religious life was the true and legitimate expression of their present condition and feelings. So long as the Bridegroom was with them, how could they mourn who were His chosen friends and attendants? Days indeed were coming, when the Bridegroom should be taken away from them, and these would be days of darkness and tribulation for those whose office it should be to prepare the Bride for His return; then there would be just occasion for sorrow, and they would fast because there should be cause sufficient. These acts of the religious life in the kingdom of heaven could not be of constraint, the mere result of obedience to ordinances; they must be the genuine expression of spiritual sorrow and humiliation.

This however is only one part of the complete answer to the question why the religious life of the kingdom differs from that under the law. Jesus Christ gives another reason, which he explains by a twofold parable. It is useless (He says) to patch up an old garment with new cloth. He had not come to mend and restore the old garment of legal observances, to supplement its defects by incongruous additions, and thus create a system half Law and half Gospel. The effect of this would only be that, the new being stronger than the old, the heterogeneous mixture would not cohere; better to have even the rags of Judaism, which at least were consistent throughout, than such a motley patchwork. What is necessary, we must conclude from the parable, is a garment altogether new, a new outer garb for the new spiritual life. This is more distinctly affirmed in the second illustration. New wine, fermenting and effervescing, could not be safely kept in old stiff worn skins; it would only burst these, so that both the wine would be spilt and the bottles destroyed. New wine requires new, strong, flexible ἀσκούς. That is, the new spiritual principles of the kingdom cannot be contained in the old legal forms of religious life; if men endeavour to shut up the spirit of the Gospel in such unsuitable vessels, the result will be both that the forms must perish in the process, and that the spirit itself will be lost. New forms of religious life must be provided, such as may be capable, both by their flexibility and by their appropriateness, to preserve the activity and the power of the new spirit.

In St Luke's Gospel other words of Jesus Christ are recorded here, which not only indicate His wonderful insight into the feelings by which the human mind is

governed, but supply some additional guidance as to the forms of the new economy. "No man," He said, "having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better." And why is it preferred? Not merely from habit or old associations, but because the old is mellowed and ripened; the crudity and harshness are subdued by age. There was some excuse therefore for those who could not at once appreciate the superiority of the new wine of the Gospel. But as the best wine improves the most by keeping, so the real virtues of its spiritual truths would become more apparent afterwards than at first. And, we must infer, the wine and the bottles in which it is kept would *age* together. The flexibility and capability of expansion, necessary for the raw new wine, would not be required for the same wine when it has ripened. We might expect therefore that the forms in which the new wine of the Gospel is contained would somewhat alter their character in course of time. They would acquire more fixity, would more nearly resemble in character the forms of the old law, and this not, as some imagine, because of any deterioration in the spirit of Christianity, but on the contrary because, as the novelty of the doctrine passed away, more fixed forms would be suited for the ripened wine.

From the first part of the answer given by Jesus Christ, it might be hastily concluded, that the spontaneity of the new Gospel life is inconsistent with all forms. But our divine Teacher sanctions no such half-truths. If we examine His teaching carefully and impartially, we shall always discover the other side of every truth. He teaches in the latter part of His reply, with equal distinctness, that forms are necessary to preserve the spiritual principles. Only they must

be such as are adapted to the nature of the new life. Of these new bottles for the new wine, new forms for the new spirit, one, baptism, already has appeared; and in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount the elements of others have been indicated. But one other act of Jesus Christ, which we shall have to consider in the following chapter, was necessary before there could be any further development of the organic life of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

It will be well to consider, at this stage of our investigations, by what different methods it might be conceived possible for the spiritual principles, which we have thus far traced in the teaching of Jesus Christ, to be developed in human life and grow into organised and definite forms. He has spoken of spiritual powers in the mind and affections of man as the inner forces which shall form, direct, and control his outward life. Whence these powers are to be derived, what shall quicken and maintain them, as yet cannot be fully or definitely revealed, but He teaches generally that "our Father which is in heaven" is the overflowing source of every good thing, and will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Now it is possible to conceive—and indeed this is the idea which many Christians form of the society which Jesus Christ calls His Church—that its organisation would be nothing else than such as should be determined by the different measure in which different men should partake of these spiritual forces. That Christians would be distinguished and separate from other men simply by their being in spirit such as belong to the kingdom of heaven: and that among Christians those should exercise certain func-

tions who should be qualified for such functions. Such an organisation would be purely subjective: every state would be created by a man's personal qualities, and be dependent on them, and have no real existence apart from them. I do not say that an organisation of this nature could sufficiently fulfil the purposes of Jesus Christ as already expounded by Him—that the spirit of the kingdom could be preserved without forms, distinct from it, containing it but not identical with it—but such a conception is at all events possible. Indeed, we must admit that there is much in the teaching of Christ and His apostles, which taken by itself might seem to confirm such an idea of the organisation of Christ's Church. And more than this, we must allow that the purpose and meaning of any organisation that is derived out of the fundamental principles of Christ's kingdom must be to express and maintain these spiritual distinctions. The organisation of the old economy was insufficient and wholly defective, because it utterly failed to do this. What man inherits by natural descent is not good but evil; and therefore the principle of succession by natural birth, either to the blessings of the covenant, or to offices in the Church of God, is an essentially unspiritual principle. The organisation which should represent the kingdom of heaven could not possibly be of this kind. But already we have found sufficient indications that it is not purely subjective. The disciples of Jesus, no less than those who come to John and profess repentance, are baptised. The separation, the first process in organisation, is not merely something internal, it is an outward and visible act; nor is it effected simply by those actions which prove men to possess the internal qualifications—by fruits meet for repentance,

necessary as these are to themselves—but by a symbolical rite. The doctrine of baptism, that is the truth revealed in Holy Scripture as to the mystical significance of baptism and its relation to the new life of man, is not a subject which falls within the present inquiry. Such questions lie in another sphere from those discussed in our argument, to which we apply tests unsuitable for truths which are beyond the range of human knowledge. And it is unnecessary, as I have before observed,* to inquire why the incipient organisation of the society founded by Jesus Christ was determined by the rite of baptism rather than by some other method. It is sufficient for our purpose to observe, on the one hand that such was the method marked out by Christ Himself from the first, and at the close of His ministry expressly ordained; on the other, that the use of such a rite itself distinguishes between a state and the qualities proper to the state. The fundamental law in the organisation of the Christian society which is thus established, and which we shall find fully confirmed and unfolded as we proceed, may be thus expressed: A state in the kingdom of heaven is created by an authoritative and formal act, admitting to that state one judged to be capable, and imposing on him the responsibility of exhibiting the spiritual qualities proper to such a state; such responsibility implying (we must add, although the proof of this is not yet given) that the admission entitles him to the powers by which such qualities are produced.

This definition is indeed a cumbrous and circuitous mode of explaining that which might be expressed more emphatically, and in a certain sense more truly, in few words; but that simple truth would carry us beyond

* *Supra*, p. 45.

the scope of our present argument, and the clumsy definition may at all events prevent misunderstandings hereafter. It will be observed that with some modification such a definition would apply to the primeval ordinance of marriage, out of which the order of human society according to nature is legitimately derived. In that also a state is created by some authoritative and formal act, certain qualifications for the state are presupposed, mutual affection and reciprocal duties are qualities proper to the state. At the same time, as has been before observed (p. 55), the state is not that of law properly so called; it is an order in a higher sphere than that of law, being a part of the divine order of man's original constitution.

Now it is difficult to conceive that the organisation of the society founded by Jesus Christ would commence according to a certain law, and then follow one totally different. But to avoid any hasty generalisation, let us carefully consider the meaning of Jesus Christ's own acts. Among the disciples who were separated from the world the Gospel history itself discovers to us great differences of character, as indeed might reasonably be anticipated, especially as the new light and life that had visited them would naturally make individuality of character more distinct. These differences very soon exhibited themselves, and were such as would of themselves have given some kind of organisation to the infant society. One with the energy and capacities of Simon Peter must have been a leader; a Didymus must have held a subordinate position. If that which some imagine to be the most spiritual organisation of the Christian Church were the true and legitimate representation of the spiritual principles of the kingdom, we might expect to

find the divine Founder first training His disciples by His example and teaching for future labours, and then leaving to the inherent force of their spiritual gifts and powers to determine their several functions and offices.

But Jesus did that which was essentially different. He called out men whom He judged most capable, appointed them to a definite office, and thus organised an apostolic body separate from the rest of the disciples, and these men he intrusted with the duties and functions proper to a special office, for which He prepared them during His own ministry.

The early history of some of the Twelve, and the process by which they were called out from secular employments to be not only disciples but companions and followers of Jesus Christ, are recorded with different details by all the evangelists. Some had been disciples of John, and through his teaching were led to believe on Jesus. Simon, who from the first received the name of Peter or Cephas with special reference to his future office, Andrew the brother of Simon, and the two sons of Zebedee, were summoned from their occupation as fishermen, with the promise that they should be made fishers of men. Philip received an express call at the beginning of Jesus Christ's ministry. Levi, or Matthew, the publican, after it had commenced, was called from the receipt of custom. Thus Jesus gathered round Himself elements of the new society which He was establishing, until the time came for that which was the next step in its organisation in a definite form, the separation of those whom He had chosen for the office He was about to institute. The process by which this separation was effected is particularly described. In going about through the towns

and villages of the populous districts of Galilee, He was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes eagerly seeking instruction and worn out with following Him from place to place, having no other spiritual food, and thus scattered about like sheep without a shepherd. He therefore urged on the disciples the duty of prayer to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. This is mentioned in St Matthew's Gospel in immediate connection with the appointment of the Twelve; and whether the chronological order of the events be exactly observed or not, it is evidently intended by the evangelist to exhibit the motive causes in Jesus Christ's own mind of the solemn act subsequently recorded. Other Gospels relate that He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God, and when it was day He sent for His disciples and out of them selected twelve, and there, on the mountain which was consecrated by the prayers of the divine Head of the Church, in the presence of that chosen company, He appointed or ordained these Twelve whom also He named apostles.

No act could have more distinctly indicated an authoritative and formal separation to an office. It will be observed, with reference to the definition given above, which was suggested by the rite of baptism, that in this case also there is a previous judgment as to the capacity of those selected, after earnest prayer, for appointment to the office. There are qualities necessary for the duties of the office, and for the possession of these qualifications those who are appointed are responsible; and there are, as we shall find more fully hereafter, gifts and powers to enable them to fulfil all the responsibilities.

The functions of the office committed to the chosen Twelve will discover themselves as the history proceeds, although they were not distinctly defined till after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor exercised in their fulness till the day of Pentecost. At present, the apostles are sent forth to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses, and cast out unclean spirits. A charge is delivered to them by their Lord, in which directions are given as to their duties, and they are encouraged by special promises. This charge, commentators observe, is divisible into three portions. The first relates to the immediate duties of their mission during His own lifetime. They were to bear the same message as the Baptist and Jesus Himself delivered, of the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, not to Gentiles or Samaritans, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Directions were given as to making no provision for their own support or protection, which were applicable during the first period of their office, but were expressly reversed by Christ at the close of that period. The second part of His charge refers to the period between His being taken from them to the time of His coming in judgment to overthrow the Jewish theocratic state, and establish His kingdom in its power. That period would be one of great conflict and suffering, and He warns them beforehand that they might be prepared and not be offended. The last part of His address looks forward through all the subsequent history of His Church on earth, and makes general the same solemn warnings of conflict, and encouragements to perseverance, to all who should hereafter be occupied in the same labour of love. There was a work of sacrifice and self-denial before all the servants of Christ, in which the apostles

were to be the leaders, foremost both in labour and in suffering. But there was this mighty encouragement: "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me." And this truth was not merely to strengthen the faith of the apostles. It is the enunciation of a general principle through which all Christians are bound together in a common work and common interests. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet," that is, as a prophet, "shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." It is therefore a law of the kingdom, that through sympathy and communion in spirit and in deed there is real fellowship and participation in the same blessings. This is the very truth of all being one body in Christ, which St Paul subsequently expounds. But we must notice how this principle co-operates with the other which we have been considering, of special offices being assigned to certain members of the society. For since one to whom an office is not assigned yet partakes in the reward, literally the wages, of the office; therefore the organisation by the distinction of offices is no division. The whole body is one, and that which is done by any member according to his office is not done for himself but for all, and every one by sympathy and fellowship has a common part and interest therein. The apostles were thus representatives of the whole body of Christ's disciples, in whose behalf their office was ordained, and who through spiritual unity partook in all their ministry, whilst their pre-eminence was conspicuous chiefly in labouring and enduring.

Thus far then we simply find chosen men appoi[illegible]

to a distinct office and sent forth on their mission. But there are also noticeable points in the structure of this apostolic body, which are full of meaning as to the future organisation of the society founded by Jesus Christ. First, we must observe, the number of apostles appointed by Jesus Christ is definite, and evidently typical. He Himself connects the number with that of the twelve tribes of Israel. There are twelve heads of the organisation of the spiritual Israel. So clearly marked is this that, as we shall find afterwards when one of the number by transgression fell, the original number was completed before the gift of the Holy Ghost and the quickening of the Church into life and power by His presence. Indeed we may observe that in all those acts of Jesus Christ through which His Church was founded, we trace definite and typical numbers. Forty days He was tempted; He appointed twelve apostles; He sent out seventy disciples; three days He lay in the grave; during forty days He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection; three times He prayed to His Father in Gethsemane, saying the same thing; seven times He spoke from the cross. Other instances will occur to students of the Gospel history. Why was this? When we examine the Apocalypse, we shall find that in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which completed all His previous manifestations of Himself, the same symbolical character again appears. Without entering into the general question of types, we have no difficulty in concluding that these definite numbers, whether we may trace some meaning in them or not, are always characteristic of acts which are representative acts, sources and roots out of which a future development is to be unfolded. Jesus Christ organised the society in the process of its

formation in this typical mould, not because hereafter in the development the same numbers were to appear, but because this definite structure is suited for the compactness and completeness in itself of the seed out of which the great tree with its spreading branches was to grow.

And the singular definiteness of the structure of the apostolic body is yet more apparent on closer examination. Notwithstanding the varieties in the lists of the twelve apostles given by the several evangelists, certain facts are common to all. In all Simon Peter stands first in order, and by St Matthew is expressly called "the *first*." In all the catalogues there are three quaternions, in each of which the same apostle always stands first; Peter in the first, with his brother Andrew, and the brethren James and John; Philip in the second, with Bartholomew (probably Nathanael whom Philip brought to Jesus), and Thomas and Matthew; James the son of Alphæus, with Judas or Lebbæus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who always, whenever he is mentioned, is placed at the end of the list.

Now what is the meaning of this order? Was it that into which they naturally fell from some differences in their characters and capacities? Undoubtedly among men holding the same office there is always a tendency, in all social organisations, to a natural order being formed amongst them, especially when there is considerable development of the powers of each individual. The dead level of equality is never found either in the natural or spiritual life, when it is life indeed. But it seems much more probable, from the varieties no less than the agreements of the several catalogues, as well as from other circumstances, that, whilst the office

committed to the Twelve was one and the same, yet a certain order amongst them was recognised if not appointed by Jesus Christ from the first. Respecting Simon Peter there can be no doubt; he received even before his appointment the name which determined his position. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surnamed Boanerges—sons of thunder—implying, probably, their mighty powers as proclaiming messages from heaven. These three were witnesses of some of the most notable events of Jesus Christ's life; and on one occasion Andrew was united with them in a select company. The hints which are contained in the Gospels as to the personal characters of the several apostles do not indeed enable us to discover all the differences which determined the classification; but there are sufficient to suggest some interesting materials for thought. Though Andrew was so zealous that, as soon as he knew Christ himself, at once he brings his brother Peter to Him, yet that zeal was not of itself sufficient qualification for the first of the apostles. Though Philip was one whom Jesus sought out and called as prepared for the kingdom—one also who at once preached Christ to Nathanael; and though Nathanael was an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile; yet neither of these was classed in the first four. Again, the qualifications which made Judas the best suited of all to bear the common purse—those which give aptitude for secular affairs—are such as may be of value even in the apostolic office, and yet they are the very lowest of all, and most likely to be perverted. They bear the same relation to those that distinguish a Peter and a John, as the character of Martha bore to that of her sister Mary. On the other

hand, it must be observed that the character and capacities, which most highly qualify for the apostolic office, were not those with which the human affections of Jesus most tenderly sympathised. John, not Peter, was the beloved disciple.

That an order was sanctioned, if not actually appointed, by Jesus Christ amongst the Twelve cannot, I think, be denied by any careful student of the Gospels. The primacy of Peter among his fellows was but one part of the structure of the apostolic body. That he was their chief and leader, that he spoke and acted for them, represented them, and that Jesus Christ spoke to him as the representative of the apostolic body, are conspicuous facts in the Gospel history. But first of all this primacy was no isolation of Peter from the rest as if he held an office superior to that of an apostle; it was simply that in which the order amongst those who in office were equal culminated; and further, whilst the principle of an order amongst those who hold the same office is thus sanctioned by Jesus Christ, yet how this will affect the future development of the Church, or modify its organisation, we can only discover by examining that development. To reason by deduction from the primacy of Peter that there must be such a form in the ultimate organisation, is a mode of dealing with the question of the development of the Church little likely to lead us to true conclusions. There might be reasons for a primacy in the typical body, which would altogether cease when the organisation should pass into a more advanced stage.

Again, as Peter was nothing more than an apostle, although he was the first and the most eminent, so was

Judas Iscariot nothing less than an apostle, although he was the last and the traitor. Judas had left all to follow Christ, drawn to him undoubtedly by his mighty words and works. He was appointed in the number of the Twelve, was sent forth to preach the Gospel of the kingdom with all the powers of an apostle, such as then were given, because he was counted faithful and judged capable. When others turned back offended at the teaching of Jesus he stood firm. Had he not been trusted by his brethren he would not have been made the treasurer of the common purse. Until his treachery exposed the sin which had gradually undermined his character, and has made him an example to all generations, none suspected his unsoundness except the Lord to whom all hearts were open, who marked the growth of the fatal evil, and long before it was discovered to the rest could say, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" We must not complicate this matter with the mysterious question of the divine foreknowledge and predestination. That Judas by his fall fulfilled the Scripture, that in God's counsels of infinite wisdom even the wickedness of the reprobate is foreseen, and that all things are ordered to fulfil those counsels, no Christian can doubt. But to introduce these truths into the question of the organisation of the Church, a human society, by the Son of Man, can only lead to that pernicious confusion of thought which makes God the author of sin. The truth which is conspicuously brought out by the history of Judas Iscariot is, that a man may hold the highest office in the Church of Jesus Christ, may be really an apostle, and yet be a very son of perdition. On the theory which confounds the office with the spiritual qualifica-

tions proper to the office the case of Judas Iscariot is unintelligible. I should rather say it directly contradicts every such theory. It is the dark foil which, by the most monstrous sin of which man was ever guilty, exhibits the truth that an ordinance of Christ is a reality whatever the receiver may be or become.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

THROUGHOUT the ministry of Jesus Christ His acts and His teaching by turns expound one another. He first preaches the coming of the kingdom and unfolds its elementary principles, and then He appoints His apostles, the first ministers of the kingdom. After a time both the subject and the mode of His teaching undergo a change. He begins to speak in parables, and these parables contain the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, some profound truths, concealed from the minds of those who were unwilling to learn under the disguise of analogies in the natural world, which, when expounded to His disciples in private, open to their minds new and hitherto unexplored realms of knowledge; so new and unfamiliar indeed, that even after the clearest explanation from their divine Master they understood but little.

To represent the true idea of the kingdom, Jesus Christ, in a series of pictures taken from the natural life of man, sketches out its main features. A sower goes forth to sow his seed, but unlike men who are sparing of their seed and fearful of wasting it, casts it everywhere, however slight the chance may seem of a harvest. It falls on the trodden road, only to be food for fowls of the air. It falls on shallow soil, hardly

covering the rock, to spring up rapidly and wither in the heat of the noonday sun. It falls on the field uncleared of weeds, and the thorns and thistles grow faster than the corn and choke it. But it also falls on good soil, and there it brings forth fruit to perfection. Again, a man has sown his field with the best wheat, but at night a malicious enemy sows it with tares—apparently a bastard corn—a useless and noxious weed. As the wheat springs up, the tares grow up with it, but so nearly do they resemble the corn, that at first the mischief done is not discovered, and their presence only seems to indicate a more abundant crop. But when the ear is put forth, the real state of the field is apparent. The servants, indignant at the malicious act, ask their master whether the tares should not be at once rooted up? No, there is danger of rooting up the wheat with the tares. Some plants that seem to you to be tares may at last prove to be wheat. The very plucking up of the tares will unsettle and injure the wheat. Let both grow together till the harvest, and then I will direct the reapers first to gather together the tares to be burned, and then to collect the wheat into my barn.

The view of the kingdom of heaven presented in these two parables is one which, even to the present hour, after the experience of more than eighteen centuries, it is difficult fully to realise. Can such scenes of very partial success, of disastrous failure as it seems to us, be really representations of the kingdom of heaven? It is true that the actual results of Christ's Gospel in the world answer with marvellous exactness to these figurative descriptions; but is this what was intended when the Baptist and the Saviour proclaimed the coming of the kingdom?

In order to lay hold of the leading principles here expounded we must notice, that the fundamental analogy is between the fruit of the earth necessary for the sustenance of man, and the spiritual fruits in man's moral being, such as were enumerated in the Sermon on the Mount. Hitherto there has been no declaration of the method through which these fruits should be produced and the spiritual change effected in man, beyond that which is implied in Christ's disciples being the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. The new idea is that "the word of the kingdom" is the seed out of which the plants bearing fruit should grow. The parables contemplate an agency for sowing this seed, the sower of the good seed being the Son of Man in all cases, whether He does it by His own personal ministry, or employs the ministry of the servants whom He appoints and sends, as He had already sent the Twelve. What this seed of the kingdom is, as yet is not fully revealed; but the sowing of the whole world with the seed is now declared to be the work of the kingdom, the process through which its blessings are to be extended and realised. Not by the authority of law, not by some mighty display of power, but by germinal truths taking root in the minds of men, and unfolding themselves into new dispositions and affections, into a new life with its corresponding fruits, is the kingdom of heaven to be established. We must remember, however, that the process, through which these results ensue, is described here only so far as is consistent with the present incomplete revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom. The deeper mysteries of the Atonement, of the work of the Holy Ghost, and generally of the grace of the Gospel, are not yet disclosed. We need not import into the questions which these

parables suggest considerations derived from the more complete revelation. The actual facts are stated; first that, from the different conditions in which the word of the kingdom finds the hearts of men, in some the seed takes no root, in others its growth is soon checked, in others the fruit never comes to maturity, but where it falls on congenial soil, although the produce largely varies, yet it amply repays the labour of the spiritual husbandman; the end is accomplished, much fruit is brought forth for the Son of Man to the glory of God. Again, not only are there failures arising from man's own moral condition: it is also foretold that seeds of evil would be scattered abroad by the enemy of Christ, the upgrowth from which would fill the whole field with pernicious weeds. Yet these would often so closely resemble the true results of the word of the kingdom, that although it is apparent that tares are growing with the wheat, that false disciples abound, that the righteous are a small scattered remnant, nevertheless the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked would have so much in common, that the attempt to pass judgment and distinguish now would endanger the true interests of the kingdom. It will be observed that this is one form of the fundamental law, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," though other reasons for this tolerance are also here assigned. This law however, as we have found before, does not imply that there may not be exceptional cases in which a noxious growth becomes so manifest that judgment must be exercised; even as no good husbandman would leave thistles growing in his field. But those things which outwardly may somewhat resemble the good, although they spring from a root of evil, and become offences (σκανδαλα), stumbling-blocks to others,—and

those also who work iniquity, the authors of these offences,—must for the present as a general rule remain in the kingdom, lest greater injury should ensue from their removal by any judgment of ours than is even caused by their presence. When the end of the present age shall come, then all these evils shall be taken out of the kingdom, and the offenders shall receive their merited punishment. The purpose of Christ shall still be accomplished notwithstanding all these attempts of the enemy, and at last the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

These two parables evidently contemplate a world-wide scheme for sowing the seed of the kingdom. As to its results we must be assured that they will in the end fulfil the purposes of God, and meanwhile we must not be offended if the present condition of the kingdom differs much from that which the eager desires of Christ's servants would have anticipated. Impatient longings for a perfect Church are natural, but experience abundantly proves that our feelings are a very unsafe guide in all things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven. There is, however, another question here which the language of Jesus Christ in the second parable suggests but does not answer. If He has ordained an organisation for sowing good seed, what of those who sow evil seed? It is sown "when men slept," which seems to imply something more than "by night;" for if the intention of the enemy had been suspected beforehand, men would have watched. Certainly this mixing of bad seed with good is represented as an evil counteracting the true work of the kingdom, and not a mere accident accompanying that work in the nature of things; and therefore it is such as calls for vigilance on the part of the Lord's servants in order to prevent it as far

as possible. The agents of the enemy in this parable evidently correspond with the false prophets who often come in disguise, and teach doctrines fatal to the souls of men. In the Sermon on the Mount these are to be judged now, being known by their fruits; the parable intimates the difficulty of distinguishing the fruits of this false teaching, at least so as to separate completely at present the evil from the good. We have here again two antithetical truths,—on the one hand the necessity of judgment in regard to false teaching, on the other hand the difficulty and peril of judgment as to persons, in the present order of the kingdom of heaven. Either of these truths used without the other leads to false conclusions; the one is perverted by those who, denying the existence of the Church as an organised body, would leave to every individual to decide between true and false teaching; the other by those who argue for a "multitudinous" Church, without creeds, without discipline, and therefore no real representation of the kingdom of heaven. But we shall find, in the future teaching of Jesus Christ, that sufficient provision is made, in the order of His kingdom, for the free action of these opposite principles.

The two next parables, in the series recorded by St Matthew, depict other aspects of the kingdom. The one represents its growth from a very small beginning into a vast world-wide system. The mustard-seed was a very proverb for the least and most insignificant of all things; and yet when it grew up, it became not a mere herb, but a tree in which the birds of the air could find shelter. So should it be with the kingdom of heaven. The seed sown, though in human estimation insignificant and contemptible, should not grow up into a mere sect, one among the many results of

the teaching of men, but should overtop them all, and serve, as being a real kingdom on the earth, for many purposes for which these lesser growths are unsuited. Again, it is compared to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. The comparison is here—one would say evidently if many expositors of the parable had not followed one another in a different line of interpretation—not primarily with the effect of the leaven on the meal, but with its being gradually but completely mixed with the whole mass by kneading. This indeed chiefly distinguishes this parable from the preceding; that whereas in the first the kingdom is described as growing by some internal process, in the second we are reminded that its extension is not only automatical, but in this respect differs from the growth of a plant, that there must be, for the propagation of the Gospel through the mass of mankind, a ministry in which human powers and human will shall be exercised. As leaven will not spread of itself entirely without kneading, so is this external agency necessary for the complete extension of the kingdom, and therefore part of its appointed order.

Another pair of parables represents the kingdom of heaven from a different side altogether, namely, in its relation to the motives and feelings of those who receive its blessings. In the one, a man finds a treasure which is buried in a field; but the field not being his own, he keeps his discovery secret and goes and buys the field, though he has to sell all his possessions in order to purchase it. A very instructive illustration is here supplied of a truth, which for the right understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, is of paramount importance: I mean, that the possession of

the blessings of the kingdom is twofold. The possession of the field in which the treasure is hidden is in a certain sense the possession of the treasure; and yet another act is necessary in order that the treasure may benefit its possessor, and be really and completely his. He might be wholly ignorant either of its existence or its value. The owner of land in which precious jewels lie hid is a rich man, if only he knows his own wealth; but through his own ignorance, he may live and die in utter poverty. This distinction between the *objective* possession—or the blessings being really ours to use and enjoy,—and the *subjective* possession—or the blessings being really used and enjoyed by us,—is one of those fundamental principles of the kingdom of heaven which is often overlooked, and the neglect of the teaching of Christ on this subject leads to endless misunderstandings and errors. In the second of the parables, our Lord gives a further illustration, necessary for the completeness of the truth. The kingdom is like a trader who is looking for valuable pearls. He meets with one, which he is able to distinguish as surpassing all the rest in value: and he sells all that he has to become the possessor of this most precious jewel. The complementary truth which this second parable exhibits, is that to which allusion has been made already in expounding the first: I mean, that for the really profitable possession of the blessings of the kingdom the power of distinguishing their intrinsic value is necessary. The jewel merchant who can discern the value of a gem, which other men would overlook, answers to the man who by spiritual knowledge and discernment gains the blessings, which others with the same opportunities neglect and lose.

The seventh and last parable in the series given by

St Matthew, the parable of the net, not only supplements the teaching of the rest, but connects it with acts of Jesus Christ that precede and follow this teaching. The kingdom of heaven is now compared to a net cast into the sea, and gathering within its folds fish of every kind, bad and good together. When the net is full, the fishermen drag it up on the beach, and sit down and gather the good into vessels, and cast away the refuse and worthless. The scene here described was often witnessed by Jesus and His disciples on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias. Indeed the four chief disciples, the first quaternion of apostles, had been called from this very occupation to the corresponding office in the kingdom of heaven. "Follow me," Jesus had said to them, "and I will make you fishers of men." The results of the apostolic ministry were also a second time, after the resurrection, illustrated by a miraculous draught of fishes. This ministry therefore is expressly marked out by the seventh parable, as being the agency, to which several of the series refer as necessary for the permanence and extension of the kingdom. And whereas, from the parable of the tares, it might be inferred—for all earthly analogies can but imperfectly represent these mysteries of the kingdom—that the evil which should be intermingled with the good, and cannot be entirely separated, would be the result only of false doctrine and hostile agency, here we are taught that the very net of the kingdom itself encloses both good and bad; that whilst the true ministers of the kingdom endeavour by all means to gather in the souls of men, the good and the evil will be taken together, nor can the separation be made until the net is full and their work is finished. Here again Jesus Christ evidently expounds general principles of the kingdom,

leaving to His further teaching to indicate the exceptions. That such exceptions do exist we may learn from words of an apostle of Christ. "Some men's "sins," St Paul says to Timothy, in directing him as to his conduct in the Church of God, "are open before-"hand, going before to judgment, and some men they "follow after."* The provision made by Jesus Christ Himself for these exceptional cases will appear in our next chapter.

* 1 Tim. v. 24.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

THE general purpose of the apostolic office was indicated by Jesus Christ from the time of its institution. It was ordained in order to supplement and fulfil the work of the Redeemer Himself, through the ministry of His disciples. The parables have expounded yet further the nature and results of this ministry. But we have seen, that both as to the word which should be the seed of the kingdom, and as to the government and discipline of the kingdom, little is as yet revealed. The mighty scheme is only seen in some of its outlines, being unfolded before the minds of the disciples as they were able to bear the light of these divine truths.

And yet the word, out of which the kingdom should grow, was in truth being revealed to the disciples day by day through the ministry of their Lord to which their own was to succeed. For the great purpose of the ministry of Jesus, of His wonderful works as well as of His divine teaching, was gradually to manifest Himself to them as the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. That He who was associated with them in familiar intercourse, who was related to some of them by the ties of natural kindred, and whom they could perceive to be exempt

from none of the ordinary conditions of humanity, was yet the very Son of God, was a truth which no form of words could convey to their minds; the conviction must gradually be established there by His words sinking into their heart, and by the manifestation before their eyes both of His divine sovereignty over all creation, and of His divine knowledge, holiness, and love. Jesus Christ never put into their lips the confession of Himself; He left their faith to grow, and He tested and trained it for some years before He drew forth from them by the mouth of Peter the explicit and definite confession, which then had a force and value such as at an earlier period in His ministry it could not have possessed.

That confession, when once elicited, formed a marked epoch in both the teaching of Jesus Christ and in the development of the kingdom. We are told that from that time forth He began plainly to speak to the disciples of His sufferings and death. But that which concerns us now is the revelation, which immediately followed, of new truths as to the kingdom of heaven, and of the relations of the apostolic body to this kingdom.

It was apparently not very long before His last journey to Jerusalem, that Jesus formally put to His disciples the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" You know the various opinions of men respecting me, you have now heard my words and seen my works, what is your faith? Simon Peter, answering for all (as the language of St Luke * expressly indicates), replies, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" This profession was now no mere formula, with little or no meaning attached to the words. Although Peter knew

* Luke, ix. 20. Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπε, Τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

not then what he learned afterwards from the subsequent manifestation of Christ in His death and resurrection and from the teaching of His Spirit, yet this was already the clear utterance of that living personal faith in the divine person of Christ out of which proceeds the whole life of the Church. And Jesus at once pronounces a blessing on such a faith. "Blessed art "thou, Simon Barjona," He said, "for flesh and blood "hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which "is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art "Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church, and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of "heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, "shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt "loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

The meaning of these words, so far as we can interpret them in the present stage of our inquiry, must be determined from the connection of the whole passage both with itself and with previous teachings of Jesus Christ. We must not separate the promises made to Simon Peter from the blessing pronounced on him, nor must we interpret the language from some theory as to the Church, but in accordance with truths already revealed.

Simon Peter then here declares, in his own behalf and in behalf of the whole apostolic body, that faith which is the root-truth of the whole revelation given to man in Jesus Christ. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Personally, it was a blessing to himself beyond all earthly blessings, that this faith was now established in his heart, not by carnal wisdom but by divine teaching. But the blessing pronounced on him reaches far beyond this. Peter had learnt the

truth not through the testimony of man, but immediately, without the intervention of others, in Jesus Christ Himself. He was one of those—the first and chief of those—who were chosen to be witnesses of Christ, to testify to the world that which they heard, and saw with their eyes, and looked upon, and handled of the word of life. This word is the seed out of which the kingdom of heaven should grow; indeed the Word is, in its primary sense, Jesus Christ Himself; but, in reference to the apostolic ministry of the word, it is that manifestation of Christ in human language as the expression of human faith, through which the knowledge of Him is conveyed to the minds of men.

And this accounts for the name Cephas or Peter, given to Simon from the first by anticipation, and now confirmed. Certainly it was not given on account of any stability of character, distinguishing Simon from the rest. His impulsive disposition—hurrying him at one time to venture on the sea at the word of Jesus, only to fail when his faith is tried, and now, immediately after his noble confession, to interpose his own weak feelings in a presumptuous attempt to stay the course of Him whom he owned as his Lord and God—might seem to prove him least of all the disciples worthy of the name bestowed on him. But by that faith, which Simon first professed, he was incorporated with Him who is the one foundation, and in that Rock he is himself a rock.

We need not therefore dwell on the question, which men will decide according as their own religious feelings or theological views lead them in one direction or another, and the discussion of which must be interminable, whether the rock on which Christ builds His Church is Peter himself, or Peter's confession. In one

sense it is Peter, the representative apostle, witnessing as none others but the chosen Twelve, of which he was first, could witness to the divine mission and person of Christ. In another, it is the faith thus witnessed. In a third, and that, we may say, the truest sense of all, the Rock is Christ Himself to whom witness is given by the apostolic ministry. No one who deserves the name of a Christian would argue, that the Church is so built on Peter as not ultimately to rest on Christ Himself; and no one who deals honestly with Scripture will deny, that Christ here assigns to Peter a position immediately subordinate to Himself in that society which He calls His Church. The only question of consequence is, whether this is assigned to Peter as the representative apostle, or as distinguished from the other apostles: whether the office, the functions of which are described in this passage, is the office of the apostles among whom Peter was the first — first in order and first to confess his Lord; or whether Jesus Christ here instituted a new office with powers and functions superior to those of an apostle.

The history of the future development of the Church will abundantly answer that question. For the present it is sufficient to say, that not only is there no evidence of St Peter holding any office different from that of the rest of the apostles, or of his exercising any authority over them, but there is abundant evidence to the contrary. In whatever sense he is a foundation of the Church, in the same the other apostles are, except that his name stands first. On the foundations of the walls of the new Jerusalem are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

But what is to be understood by that, which Jesus Christ now for the first time calls His Church, and

which He declares that He will build up on a solid and permanent foundation? Hitherto, He has only spoken of the kingdom of heaven; now He uses another word, *ecclesia*, not indeed unknown, in the Old Testament language, as one term for the congregation or assembly of Israel under the law: and yet, in the language in which the evangelists wrote, more nearly associated in the minds of men with political institutions and organisations. Indeed this word connects together the religious life of Judaism and the political life of the Gentile world. And now, in this word, we must gather up those indications of a corporate Christian life, which gradually have increased and accumulated in the teaching and acts of Christ. The city set upon a hill; the candlestick to set forth the light; the fellowship among men in which judgment must not be exercised, except to prevent great injuries; the field in which the wheat and the tares grow together till the harvest; the mighty tree springing up from the least of all seeds; have all pointed to a society which should be the representative on earth of the kingdom of heaven, in which the blessings of the kingdom should be enjoyed, and by which they should be communicated to men. And whereas to all corporate society amongst men, not inward principles only, but outward acts are required for organic action, already one elementary form is used and authorised by Jesus Christ, and the necessity for other forms has been indicated. Already is the polity of the body determined by the institution of the apostolate. And now Jesus Christ gives the name to this society, and represents it as a temple, or a city, which He will build — for as yet all is future — on the rock from which the first of His apostles derives his distinctive name. It must be observed also that, the new term

now introduced, represents all His disciples as one whole. Christ says not, I will build my disciples on this rock, but I will build my Church. He speaks therefore of the foundation, not merely of the faith of each disciple, but of the corporate fellowship, of that in which all the various parts of the one whole are united, on which their unity depends.

The promise made to this Church which is built on the rock is that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The usual interpretation of these words is, that the powers of evil and darkness shall never overthrow the Church of Christ. But at all events there is another meaning yet more definite and more certain — namely, that the power of *death* shall not prevail against it. Jesus Christ subsequently, in a vision in the Apocalypse which represents His government of His Church, describes Himself as holding the keys of Death and Hades. The apostles and others, who would be pillars in this temple of God on earth, would be removed by death, but the Church of Christ, "the building of God through the Spirit," should not fail, for there never should be wanting those who by a perpetual succession should supply their place.

That in one sense the indefectibility of the Church of Christ is secured by this promise, that is, that there shall be throughout all successive generations the society instituted by Jesus Christ, confessing Him to be the Son of the living God, we may conclude with certainty from these words. But we must not add a meaning to the words beyond that which is obviously included in them. We cannot infer that this house of God will never be polluted by evils, that this temple of truth will never be defiled by errors, even such as virtually and by implication may deny the very faith

on which it is built. The spiritual building shall stand throughout all ages, however for a time it may be desecrated, even though for an appointed season the Man of Sin, the Son of perdition, should seat himself in this temple of God, and only be cast out by the brightness of the Lord's coming. We must not allow sentiment to be our guide in interpreting the teaching of Christ, or suppose that any meaning of His words can be more worthy of Him, or more profitable to us, than that meaning which is legitimately derived from them. The Church of Jesus Christ is not what our imaginations conceive to be the best suited for His heavenly kingdom, but such as in His divine wisdom He knows will best fulfil His own purposes.

But other powers and functions in the kingdom of heaven are assigned to Peter, besides that of being, by his confession of Christ, a foundation-stone of the building. In this his office could not, in the nature of things, be shared by any but those who were the original witnesses with him of "Jesus and the resurrection." But no such limitation is necessary as regards the other functions, and we shall find hereafter ample proof that these were a gift in perpetuity, needing to be continually exercised in all generations. They are, as here described, two in number; first, the gift of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; secondly, the authority to bind and loose on earth, with the assurance that such acts will be confirmed in heaven. The full meaning of these promises made to Peter must be expounded by further acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, and by the history of His Church. It will be sufficient for the present to examine the general force of these remarkable words.

First, we must observe that Jesus Christ here pro-

mises (for the gift is as yet future) not the key, but the keys, of the kingdom of heaven, as for many purposes. The office therefore includes not only the authority of opening the kingdom to those who believe, and of closing its door against the impenitent and unbelieving, but also, and to judge from subsequent teaching of Christ especially, the charge of the treasures of the kingdom, which it belongs to the steward of the mysteries of God to dispense and distribute according to his Lord's will. It implies all functions included, to use language with which we are familiar, in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; and further—to anticipate conclusions to which our argument will gradually lead us—the authority to commit to others also the same ministry: which indeed is implied of necessity, if the keys are intrusted not temporarily, but in perpetuity, to be held and used through successive generations. These functions are a personal spiritual charge to one who holds the apostolic office; in them he acts not as the minister *of* the Church, but as the minister of Christ *to* the Church. His responsibilities are personal; his own conscience, enlightened by the word and Spirit of Christ, must be his guide for their fulfilment; nor can he divide his responsibilities with others, and act merely as he obtains their consent and concurrence, or as their organ and instrument, but he "watches for souls, as one that must give account."

The second class of functions is of a different character, and must not be confounded with the former. In the next chapter we shall find that authority to bind and loose is attributed not only to Peter, or the apostolic body, but to the whole Church. So that we must conclude that in such functions the apostle acts not merely as the minister of Christ, but as the minister

of the Church in its organic action, in behalf of the whole body, and not without their co-operation and concurrence. Yet as the authority is first of all given to Peter, the representative apostle, we must infer that although such acts as are included in binding and loosing are performed on behalf of the whole Church, yet in them also there must be the free exercise of the personal conscience of him who holds the apostolic office, so far at least that none can constrain him either to bind or to loose except in accordance with his own judgment. But what did Christ mean by these acts of binding and loosing on earth? The general sense of prohibiting and allowing, which is in accordance with the Hebrew idiom, is by far the most consistent with the context. It implies all the functions of government, or, as it was called in later times, of "jurisdiction," as distinguished from those of "order." In the following chapter we shall find these powers to be connected with the exercise of discipline in the case of an offending member, which is therefore included in this class of functions, though but one part of the whole.

Of the exercise of these several powers and functions by Peter himself, we have many instances in the history as soon as the promise of Jesus Christ was fulfilled by the gift of the Holy Ghost. He was the most prominent of all the twelve apostles, as a witness to Jesus and the resurrection. He by his ministry first opened the kingdom of heaven both to Jews and Gentiles. When judgment was necessary in the Church, he pronounced Ananias and Sapphira to have lied to the Holy Ghost, and his sentence passed on earth was confirmed in heaven. Simon Magus, though admitted into the kingdom, was judged by Peter, and declared to have no part or inheritance in its blessings. But

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whilst there is this precedence and prominence given to the acts of Peter in the first building of the Church, yet neither did he only, nor did he as possessing some powers peculiar to himself, exercise these functions. The rest of the apostles gave co-ordinate testimony with Peter; and Paul conspicuously testimony of the same nature independently of Peter. The same powers of judgment and of government were indeed exercised not only by Paul himself, but also by others to whom apostolic authority was delegated by him. The conclusion which we should infer from the Gospel history, that the words spoken to Peter were addressed to him as the representative apostle, we shall find abundantly confirmed as the organisation of the Church develops itself. And if we ask why that which was intended for others was in the first instance spoken to one, the first obvious reply is, that to take the leading member of a class who holds a certain office as the representative of the class, and in him to represent the functions and powers of the office, is not only a natural and comprehensive method of exhibiting those functions and powers, but is in accordance with the characteristic style of the teaching of Jesus Christ, who, above all other teachers, selected typical facts and truths as comprehending large classes of similar facts and truths. And in this particular instance another reason may be assigned, which is indeed a principle of the utmost importance in the constitution of His Church, and which we shall more fully consider hereafter. I mean, that all functions of office in the Church are personal, and involve personal responsibilities. If the charge had been given to all the apostles, and not to one singly, it might have seemed as if the functions and their responsibilities could be divided by distribution. By singling

out one as representing every member of the same class, Jesus Christ indicates the principle of personal administration as a fundamental law of His kingdom. It would be premature here to do more than notice the first intimation of this important law, the effect of which in the organisation of the Church will be the subject of future investigation.

Another fundamental law in the constitution of Christ's Church which will determine its organisation, and distinguish it from the kingdoms of this world, is also indicated here. I mean, that, in the administration of the kingdom of Christ, powers of government, and spiritual functions such as those of teaching the Word, are essentially united. In Peter indeed, as we shall also find in subsequent words addressed to him by Christ, the apostolic office was represented in its entirety, and we cannot of course infer that all the functions assigned to Peter belong in their fulness to every pastor and teacher of the Church. But, inasmuch as the government of the kingdom of heaven is for the fulfilment of the purposes of that kingdom, that is, to witness to the truth and person of Jesus Christ, it follows that the government of the society and the ministry of the Word are necessary parts of the same administration, although in the one a co-operation of the body corporate may be needful, which is not required for the other. The principle, intimated in these words to Peter, we shall find hereafter further exhibited in the teaching of Jesus Christ, by the authority committed to the servant in the household to give to every one his portion of food, and especially by the shepherd who governs (ποιμαίνει) the flock in order to feed (βόσκειν) them.

All these principles will be expounded hereafter.

As yet we only learn distinctly from the teaching of Christ, that, in the constitution of His Church, there will be authority of a very high order; high, I mean, not because of its being more peremptory or absolute than other authority in human society, but because of the sphere in which it is exercised, and of its relation to a spiritual order and heavenly kingdom. The words of Jesus Christ looked forward to a time when He Himself would no longer be on earth but in heaven, where would be the inner court and privy council of the kingdom, by which the acts of the inferior courts on earth would be confirmed and ratified. Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the method according to which Church authority is legitimately exercised, there can be, or at least ought to be, none amongst Christians as to its reality and force when it is legitimate. Some indeed admit the truth of these solemn words of Jesus Christ, only if they are limited in meaning to Peter and the apostles personally. As if the twelve apostles were not men of like passions with us, or as if the gates of Hades had prevailed against the Church, and prevented it, as soon as the original apostles were removed by death, from possessing the functions and powers with which Christ invested it from its foundation.

CHAPTER V.

THE FUNCTIONS AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

WHEN we consider that on the words of Jesus Christ to Peter, which we examined in the last chapter, have been raised claims to the exercise of unlimited and unconditional authority over men, by one who is imagined to be the successor of Peter, we may well suppose that these words may have excited at the time some ambitious dreams in the minds of the disciples themselves. Jesus had indeed at once supplied a corrective by telling them of His sufferings and death to be soon accomplished at Jerusalem; but it is evident that none of the disciples were able to realise these, until the time was at hand and their Master's repeated assertions had awakened them to some sense of the impending trial. The Transfiguration, which occurred shortly after the address to Peter, and of which the three chief apostles were witnesses, would confirm their expectations of the glory of the coming kingdom. That such feelings were working in their minds we gather from the history, and the expression of these feelings led to a further development in the teaching of Christ of the fundamental principles of His kingdom. We learn from a comparison of the several accounts * in the first three Gospels, that a dispute had arisen

* Compare Matt., xviii.; Mark, ix. 33-50; Luke, ix. 46-50.

among the disciples, which of them was the greatest. It appears, at all events, that the Lord's words to Peter were not supposed to confer on him any superiority over the rest of the Twelve. The disciples were evidently conscious that such disputing for precedence was inconsistent with their Master's teaching and spirit, and it was only when He showed them that He knew all that had passed, that they asked Him, "Who then "is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Not the greatest, but μείζων, greater; what makes one man superior to another? what is the rule and standard of greatness? To this question Jesus Christ gave a reply, in reference to the office of the Twelve, which He afterwards more fully expounded, namely, that he who would be first must be least of all and servant of all. But also to make His answer applicable universally, and independently of any office or work in His Church, He takes a little child in His arms, and reminds the disciples that unless they are converted and become as little children,—unless they have the poverty of spirit on which His first blessing was pronounced in the Sermon on the Mount, — they cannot enter into the kingdom: "whoever therefore," He adds, "shall "humble himself as this little child, that man is greatest "in the kingdom of heaven." A man is great only in proportion as he possesses the same spirit as first distinguishes those to whom the kingdom belongs. These little ones, who have the childlike spirit of humility, are the honoured sons of the kingdom, the true representatives of Christ, for whom he cares as His own, whose angels always behold the face of His Father in heaven.

These principles at once sweep away the notion of true greatness or pre-eminence in the kingdom of heaven

being determined by any rank or office in the Church, however real the authority and powers of that office may be. Office in the Church, as will be explained more completely afterwards, is not for self-exaltation, but only for service. But even this lesson is not sufficient to correct the evil tendencies generated by a false view of office in the kingdom, and we cannot avoid very serious misapprehensions as to the true constitution of the Church of Christ except by following the teaching of Jesus at this period of His ministry a step further.

The words of their Master, declaring that whosoever receives one of these little ones receives Christ Himself, seem to have recalled to the minds of the apostles a promise which they considered to be peculiarly intended for themselves. St John, anxious, we may suppose, to elicit from Christ a confirmation of their own special rights and prerogatives, told Him of some man whom they had seen casting out devils in His name, who yet "followed not" with them. Not only was he not of the number of the Twelve, but he did not recognise their office and authority; and "we forbad "him," John says, "because he followed not with us." It is impossible not to regard this as a very significant, indeed a representative, fact. The casting out of evil spirits was the first of the powers given to the apostles; apparently the lowest of all their powers, and one which the Jews themselves, as the ancient people of God, in some measure possessed; yet one which was a proof of the victory of God's kingdom over Satan's, and a sign of the presence and authority of God. In later times, when Jewish exorcists took on them to cast out evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus, they signally failed. So that it is evident, that it was not

only the name of Christ, but the legitimate use of that name by those who were justified in using it, which produced the result. In the present case some believer in Christ, knowing the value of the name of Jesus, took on himself without authority or commission by that powerful name to cast out evil spirits from men. Was this man right or wrong in so doing? Is the use of the powers inherent in the name of Jesus Christ legitimate, when that use is not in accordance with the order in His Church appointed or authorised by Him? The conclusion, which the apostles drew from the previous acts and teaching of Christ, was one which many still infer from the proofs given in Holy Scripture of a special ministry having been ordained by Christ for such purposes; namely, that he who departs from the appointed order, although he works in the name of Christ and by faith in that name, ought to be forbidden to assume functions not committed to him. And we must not draw inferences from the words of Jesus Christ which are not implied by it. He says not (as this reply of Jesus is often understood to mean), "It matters not whether he follows with you, so long as he uses my name." Jesus Christ would not have appointed and organised the apostolic body for a special purpose, if that purpose could have been fulfilled as well without such order and office. But He did say, "Forbid him not; for there is no man who will do "a miracle (exercise a power) in my name, and can "readily speak evil of me. For he who is not against "you, is on your part." Jesus Christ defends the man on the broad grounds that his intentions were good, that he was a friend and not an enemy, and that therefore he is not to be opposed but recognised as a fellow-helper. This remarkable instance, occurring under the

very eye of Jesus Christ Himself, on the one hand leaves the widest margin for charity in regard to all works undertaken in the name of Christ and against the power of Satan, on the other proves distinctly that labours may be well-intentioned, pious, and successful, and yet be a departure from the order appointed by Christ in His Church. It comes before us as a startling anticipation, I might almost say a prophecy, of difficulties which in every age of the Church, and never more than in the present day, have perplexed those who desire to be guided by their Master's will. It answers at the same time two questions,—the one, "Can Church order be "really an ordinance of Christ, if labours not according "to that order are effectual against the power of evil?" and the other, "Since Church order is the ordinance of "Christ, can those who do not conform to that order "be regarded as fellow-labourers for Christ?"

The self-same questions under other forms have presented themselves at different times. Under the old dispensation, the religious order of God's people was distinctly determined by divine law. Yet not only was the spirit of prophecy oftentimes given independently of that order, but even when an order was appointed by God for the administration of that spirit, its gifts did not always follow the exact course of the order. Thus Moses was directed to select seventy elders, and bring them to the tabernacle, that they might receive a portion of his spirit.* But there were two, who, though included in the original number, yet came not to the tabernacle as Moses had appointed under divine direction. And when, notwithstanding this irregularity, the spirit rested on them and they began to prophesy, not in the sacred precincts but in

* Numbers, xi. 16-29.

the camp, Joshua, zealous for the authority of Moses and for the appointed order, with the same youthful impetuosity as St John displayed under the Gospel said, "My lord Moses, forbid them." But the reply was, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all "the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord "would put His spirit upon them." This absence in Moses of the pride of office, and of jealousy in regard to the apparent neglect of his authority, if only the Lord's work was done, is even surpassed by the spirit of the great apostle Paul, who, when some preached Christ of envy and strife, seeking to add affliction to his bonds, rejoiced that whether in pretence or in truth* Christ was preached. There are distinctions in the several cases, which will become intelligible as our inquiry into the order of Christ's Church proceeds. But this principle is common to all, namely, that a work, which is a deviation from a divine order, may yet be such as ought to be accepted as done for the kingdom of God.

Thus then, by an analysis of this portion of Jesus Christ's teaching, we arrive at two principles, which are antithetical or counterbalancing truths to those before expounded by Him as to the powers of the apostolic office, and the divine polity of His Church; the first, that office in His Church is not the standard of pre-eminence in the kingdom; the second, that the reality of the divine order of the Church does not invalidate those works which are done for Christ externally to that order.

The key-note of all this discourse of Jesus Christ is that, which we shall find more and more to be the one fundamental principle embodied and expressed in the

* *εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται.*—Philip. i. 18.

whole system of His Church, His own divine love for all whom He calls His little ones, who in child-like humility believe on Him. For their good is the order of His Church appointed; for their benefit, even departures from that order are allowed. And in the same spirit of love for the very least of these His brethren, Christ proceeds to speak of the exceeding evil and guilt of offences, σκάνδαλα, those things which cause His people to stumble, which are occasions of falling. In the parable of the tares of the field, the evils growing up and remaining in the kingdom until the end shall come are called σκάνδαλα, and to these evidently Jesus Christ here refers. His words are a very necessary warning against the feeling, that because the present state of the Church is one of imperfection, because, as a general rule, evils cannot be eradicated at once without some injury to the good, therefore these evils are to be excused and counted lightly of, when they are inflicting deadly injuries on the souls of men. And here the question naturally arises, will there be in the Church of Christ any provision for removing those σκάνδαλα, which cause greater injury by continuing, than could arise from their being taken away, and the removal of which therefore love for Christ's little ones demands? This question is now treated by Jesus Christ, and in doing this He expounds some new and very fundamental truths, both as to the functions of the Church and the true force of its corporate action.

The form of evil which He selects, as causing offence to the little ones who believe on Him, is that of dissensions and disputes among those who are called to be brethren. He directs, that if an injury is inflicted by one on another, the person who considers himself

injured should first endeavour to heal the breach by private remonstrance. If this fails, he should unite with himself "one or two more, that in the mouths of "two or three witnesses every word may be established." This is what the law required for the security of testimony, and the relation of all such action to law we shall trace hereafter.* But we must not suppose that Jesus Christ is here laying down rules to be obeyed in the letter, which would be at variance with the whole tenor of His teaching. He is indicating the caution, forbearance, and judgment that should be used before having resort to the last and most extreme measure. "But if he shall refuse to listen to them, tell it to the "Church; and if he shall refuse to hear the Church, "let him then be to thee as a heathen man and a "publican."

Now this important passage, the true meaning of which involves a large class of Church questions, we are bound to interpret, not by some theory as to the Church—as is the custom with commentators, some of hierarchical views asserting that the Church means the rulers of the Church, others of congregational tendencies explaining it as a particular congregation—but in accordance with the truths as to the Church which are expounded in the previous teaching of Jesus Christ, and as expressing a large comprehensive principle, not as supplying a mere rule for particular cases. The Church has been already exhibited, as a world-wide society founded on Christ through the apostolic office. The action then of which Jesus Christ speaks as the final remedy for the evil described, is the corporate action of the society, whatever may be the legitimate mode of that action. He does not here explain how

* See Book III., Chap. xiv.

that action should proceed; He simply affirms the principle, that the Church, as a society, would possess the right, and that it ought, for the removal of σκάνδαλα and the maintenance of peace, to exercise the right, of determining controversies between Christians; and further that any one who should refuse to accept the authority of the Church in such decisions, ought to be accounted by others as cut off from their fellowship.

Thus far the purport of Christ's words is sufficiently clear; the question however remains, what is the legitimate sphere within which this authority of the Church should be exercised and must be recognised? That it is not merely the sphere of personal disputes is evident, for He adds at once, as the proof that such authority should be recognised, "Verily I say unto you," (by which solemn form He asserts the most important principles of His kingdom), "*whatsoever* ye shall bind "on earth shall be bound in heaven, and *whatsoever* ye "shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And yet nothing is a more certain truth than this, that all human authority, indeed all authority except that of God Himself, is limited within its own proper sphere which, if it exceeds, it loses all the power given to it by God.

The instance selected by Jesus Christ would lead us first of all to the conclusion, that all questions necessary to the internal peace of the Church lie within the proper sphere of Church authority. Of this we have a notable instance in the Acts of the Apostles when a controversy arose as to the observance of the Law by Gentile converts. (See Part III., Chap. IX.) But we must notice, that the case of disputes among brethren is introduced as part of the larger question of σκάνδαλα, causes of offence. We have seen that in

regard to some of these judgment is necessary for the protection of the highest interests of the Church. And certainly if wrongs committed against one member of the society are legitimate subjects for the exercise of the authority of the Church, much more are those which are committed against the Church itself. The Church, being a society constituted for certain purposes, has the inherent right, common to all societies, of exercising such authority over its members as may be required for the fulfilment of its purposes, and of excluding from its benefits those who refuse to submit to such authority. And it must be the judge, whether, when the conduct of any of its members affects prejudicially the interests of others, the general welfare will or will not be promoted by its authoritative interference. Such authority of society over the individual is allowed to be consistent with liberty, even by those who are most jealous of any interference with liberty.*

And now we must observe that here the same words are addressed to all the disciples, as on a preceding occasion were addressed to Peter. Whether or not others besides the Twelve were present during this discourse, we cannot determine nor does it signify. Jesus Christ here addressed them not as apostles but as disciples, as representing not one order in the Church but the whole Church. The whole tenor of the discourse proves, that in it He was speaking, not of the special duties and functions of the Twelve, but of those which are common to all Christians. It is impossible to draw a line, and assign these words exclusively to apostles, without doing the utmost violence to the language of Christ. Whilst therefore, as we have seen, the functions represented by the keys of the kingdom

* See for example Mill On Liberty, chap. iv.

of heaven are those of apostles, not of the Church corporate, and whilst the authority of binding and loosing being given to Peter personally indicates that the apostolic office is the legitimate instrument for the exercise of this authority,—yet the fact that this latter power is also assigned to all the disciples, proves that it resides, not in isolated members, but in the body, and is exercised by the apostolic office as the organ for this corporate action. Thus, to refer to instances which will be fully examined in the course of our inquiries, the decision required for the peace of the Church as to the observance of the law was promulgated by the apostles and presbyters with the whole Church, and the discipline necessary in regard to the incestuous person at Corinth was the combined act of the apostle Paul and of the majority of the Corinthian Christians. But St Paul needed no concurrence of others in his office as "steward of the mysteries of God."

These assurances as to the reality of the authority of the Church are confirmed by an analysis, so to speak, of the elementary principles of all Church life, in which the divine Teacher expounds, as none other could have expounded, the original causes from which this corporate action derives its force. "Again I say unto "you," He continues, "that if two of you shall agree "on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall "be done for them by my Father which is in heaven. "For where two or three are gathered together in my "name, there am I in the midst of them."

Now what is the peculiar force of this promise of an answer to the united prayer of two, when promises equally distinct and emphatic are given to every one who asks in faith? It does not affirm, and indeed cannot mean, that the prayer of two is certain to be heard,

but the result of the prayer of one is uncertain. Both have the same security, the truth of God, and are subject to the same condition, the will of God. But the meaning of the promise is at once apparent when it is connected with the previous teaching of Christ. For Church life, the life of the body, begins with the fellowship of two. This is the first element of the corporate union, and even in its most rudimentary form Church life has a different sphere from personal life: it concerns the mutual relations of the two, and their joint relations to others, as well as their common interests. And the true fellowship even of two is the beginning of Christian love; as St Paul says, "He that loveth *another* (τὸν ἕτερον) hath "fulfilled the law." United worship is the exponent of this common spiritual life, and to this, in its rudimentary form, Jesus Christ promises a special power, because it acts in the sphere of Christian fellowship, which is both larger and higher than that of each man's personal life.

And this promise is founded on the yet deeper truth, that where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ He is in the midst of them.

Some commentators have expounded these words, as if the Presence of Jesus Christ meant that these two or three receive full power and authority to exercise all the functions of the Church. It would be difficult to pervert more grossly the teaching of Christ. He had previously distinguished the action of two or three from the action of the Church, and now, it seems, He affirms that one is identical with the other. It would be more consistent to assert, that every Christian, having the presence of Christ assured to him, has all the authority and all the functions of the whole Church in his own person. But Christ teaches here the power of

united and corporate action; wherever two or three are gathered in His name, there is incipient Church life, there He is, to give effect and validity to all the acts that lie within the proper sphere of that elementary fellowship. The life of Christ the Head is actively present throughout the body, in the smallest part in which its corporate life is exercised.

And since, by virtue of this presence of Christ in the most elementary corporate action, the concurrent desires of two on earth are ratified in heaven by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore all Church action within its own legitimate sphere will be confirmed in the courts above.

The discourse of Jesus Christ, which we have examined in this chapter, is a most comprehensive summary of the leading principles of Church life. But as yet they appear only as general principles; their application in the actual life of man cannot be determined by a process of deduction. I do not attempt in the present stage of our inquiry to do more than exhibit, from Christ's teaching, those laws which must hereafter direct and determine the development of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIMARY ORGANISATION OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

We have already noticed, that, in the charge delivered by Christ to the Twelve on their appointment to the apostolic office, we may trace three successive periods to which its instructions and promises refer. Of these periods, the first continued during the personal ministry of the Lord Himself, at the close of which a completely new stage of development commenced, and the apostles received the powers necessary for their proper work by the gift of the Holy Ghost. As yet the Church of Christ is not born into the world; the society which is gradually forming is but the embryo of the future Church, the seed beneath the soil bursting into life. The Twelve as yet have but the functions of preaching the advent of the kingdom, healing the sick, and exercising other miraculous powers for the good of men, in attestation of their mission.

But an act of Jesus Christ, very significant as to the future structure of the Church, is recorded by St Luke, which must have occurred not long after that exposition of the fundamental principles of His future Church, which we have examined in the last two chapters. The office of the Twelve was beginning to expand under the teaching of their Lord into one of much larger

proportions, and simultaneously with this Jesus Christ appointed other seventy, and commissioned them to perform the primary functions of the office of the Twelve, who henceforth appear to have remained in constant attendance on their divine Master. These seventy "He sent two and two before His face into every city "and place where He Himself should come." They were commanded first of all, since the harvest was great and the labourers few, to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would cast forth labourers into His harvest. They were to heal the sick and to say, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. The directions and encouragements given to them were almost identical with those which the Twelve had received with reference to the first period of their ministry. But all that referred to a period subsequent to Christ's personal ministry are omitted in the charge to the Seventy. Their mission was evidently for a temporary purpose, preparatory to Jesus Christ's final work of suffering unto death, by which His Church should be established. They received no distinctive title from Christ such as the Twelve received. The history of the infant Church contained in the Acts of the Apostles, although written by the same author who records the appointment of the Seventy in his Gospel, yet contains no indication that they remained as a permanent order in the Church. Even the temporary powers committed to them were inferior to those of the apostles, and although they were directed to heal the sick, they appear to have been surprised that the devils were subject to them through the name of Christ.

Yet, although the mission of the Seventy was but for a special purpose, ceasing as soon as that purpose was accomplished, it is an act as significant as any recorded

in the history, when we regard it as an illustration of the principles in accordance with which Christ's Church must hereafter develop itself. For it indicates very distinctly, first, that organisation and defined order are, in the judgment of Christ, essential for the fulfilment of His purposes in the world. He does not give a general command to all His disciples to carry everywhere the good tidings of His kingdom, but He appoints a definite number with definite instructions and a special charge. He will not indeed have him forbidden, who, without any commission and authority, casts out devils in His name, yet as a testimony to the value and necessity of order in His Church, and against needless irregularities, He now enlarges the number of duly-commissioned ministers to whom these supernatural powers are given; and the very fact of His appointing the defined and typical number of seventy, the number, for instance, of the seventy elders appointed by Moses, whilst twelve was the number of the heads of the tribes, is itself a sign of exact and perfect order.

But besides this, although the office of the Seventy was itself temporary and not permanent, yet the fact of an additional and larger body being then appointed by Christ to supplement the ministry of the Twelve, in an office every way inferior to theirs and with inferior powers, does itself sufficiently indicate, that in the future organisation of the Church, in order that labourers might be provided to gather in the spiritual harvest—which was the idea present to His mind—a distinction of orders and offices in the ministry of the word would be necessary. We see here indeed very clearly, how as organisation progresses to maturity new distinctions arise. First, the twelve apostles are separated from the rest, and amongst the Twelve them-

selves, when they are formed into a body, certain distinctions appear. Then, as their office grows through the development of the kingdom, there is a further separation of others, from the mass of the disciples, into a new class with special functions and powers. The process is exactly that which science determines to be necessary in all evolution of organic life. This new society, although not yet born into the world as the Christian Church, nevertheless acquires more and more a definite shape in its members as it grows, a primary and incipient organisation, in which we may trace some resemblance to the mature form, although some portions, fulfilling only a temporary purpose, may change or disappear, whilst others are permanent, and are intended to be the source of new developments in another stage of its being. But, apart from such considerations, we may well conclude that, if the society founded by Jesus Christ exhibits such remarkable signs of organisation during His ministry and under His express direction, it will be no other than an organised body when it shall go forth to its conflicts with the world, to fulfil the ministry which Jesus Christ began. When the organisation is complete, it will take the place of that old religious polity, ordered by God, which is soon to be overthrown by the judgments of Christ, in order that His kingdom may be established in its power.

CHAPTER VII.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE.

FROM the time of that exposition of the fundamental principles of the Church of Christ which followed Peter's confession of the fundamental faith, the subject of the responsibilities of those, to whom a ministerial charge should be intrusted in the Church, occupies a very prominent place in Jesus Christ's teaching. To understand the force of much of His language we must notice, that it frequently contemplates several distinct phases of the kingdom, and is only intelligible by our observing such distinctions. In a following chapter we shall examine this question more fully: for the present, it is sufficient to bear in mind that the kingdom of Christ has several forms of development, which must not be confounded, yet that the kingdom is really the same throughout, even as Jesus Christ Himself is the same in His lowest humiliation and in His exaltation and triumph.

The first portion of Christ's teaching which expounds further truths as to the office of His apostles is recorded with some variations in the first three Gospels, each of the evangelists giving a somewhat different aspect of the truths.* St Luke also introduces a sum-

* Compare Matt. xix. 27—xx. 29; Mark, x. 28-46; Luke, xviii. 28-35, and xxii. 24-31.

mary of this teaching immediately after the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, either because Jesus Christ then repeated it, or because in the mind of the evangelist himself the subject was in some way connected with this ordinance. The former supposition is the more probable, and is proved, I think, by an allusion to which I shall presently refer, but it does not affect the argument. But any one who desires to appreciate the force of this teaching of Christ ought carefully to compare the language of the several Gospels. In all we find the subject expounded in some connection with that of which Christ had before treated, the nature of true greatness or precedence in the kingdom. He had been, we learn, speaking of the almost insurmountable hindrances to the rich entering the kingdom of heaven. Peter, as usual the spokesman for the Twelve, asks in reference to this, "Behold we have forsaken all "and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" The reply as recorded by St Matthew was, "Verily I "say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in "the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in "the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve "thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." St Luke records that He said on the subsequent occasion, "Ye "are they who have continued with me in my tempta-"tions. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my "Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat "and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on "thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." That this promise refers to the final glory, which is to be attained through a long period of labour and suffering, in which their Master precedes them, cannot be doubted. Yet the words, *διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν καθὼς διέθετό μοι ὁ πατήρ μου βασιλείαν*, certainly imply some present

relations to that kingdom, such as Jesus Christ held already to His kingdom in the days of His humiliation. The kingdom is not yet manifested in its glory, yet its divine power exists and is already exercised. And it is also evident from the language itself, that the promise of Jesus Christ to His apostles is one of those symbolical or typical forms in which, according to His custom, He comprehends many truths, and which are to be understood in the spirit, not in the mere letter. And further, to draw off the minds of the disciples from thoughts of personal aggrandisement, He adds that this promise was no exceptional case, but every one, who for His name's sake should forsake the world, should be rewarded both now in this life, and in the world to come; and many though first, as the apostles were, should be last; and though last should in another sense be first.

This latter truth He proceeds to illustrate by a parable, in which the kingdom of heaven is compared to a householder employing men to labour in his vineyard. Some are called early in the day, some at the eleventh hour, and yet all alike receive the same sum, the day's wages. Whatever may be the various applications and interpretations of which the parable is capable, its connection with the preceding discourse is obvious. The present state or order of the kingdom of heaven—for it is, observe, already a kingdom—is one of labour in the vineyard, the cultivation of God's vine. In this state some are first, pre-eminent for the importance and the extent of their work; others may have small and brief opportunities of labouring; yet the reward is not of debt but of grace, and those who seem to stand the highest now must not murmur because all, who labour truly, receive the same gift of eternal life. Their

very claim to superiority on the ground of their own works can only prove them to be destitute of the spirit of the kingdom, and disqualify them for its blessings.

We must not hastily infer from this parable however, that pre-eminence in the kingdom is not in proportion to the faithfulness and diligence with which the duties of an office committed to any man are fulfilled. Of this we find sufficient evidence elsewhere. The truth here is, that it is not the outward work but the inner spirit that makes the difference, so that often the last are really first and the first last. It is another counterpoise to the opposite truth, that in the Church functions powers and responsibilities would be committed to some with which others would not be intrusted. Some would be first in office, let them take heed lest they be really last. The apostles themselves were no exception to this law, as the case of Judas sufficiently proves. And therefore we cannot understand the promise of twelve thrones to the twelve apostles as a prophecy respecting them personally. It was a glorious hope set before them; but the truth it expressed concerns the whole Church and not the Twelve only.

Shortly after this, Jesus going up to Jerusalem now for the last time told His disciples of the sufferings and death that awaited Him there. Yet so little did they realise the truth of these words, that they still expected some present earthly glory, and a request made in behalf of the two sons of Zebedee that they should sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom, excited the indignation of the other disciples. Jesus Christ took occasion from this to expound, as a remedy against their ambitious

spirit, further truths as to the distinction between His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. And here it is evident that He is speaking not of some future kingdom, but of the constitution of the kingdom of heaven during the period of labour and service. "Ye know," He said, "that the rulers of the nations lord it over "them, and they who are great exercise authority to "their injury. But not thus shall it be among you. "But whoever would be great among you, let him be "your minister; and whoever would be first among "you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and "to give His life a ransom for many."

Now here Jesus Christ does not deny, but on the contrary asserts, that in the order of His Church there would be pre-eminence and authority, as really as in secular governments. But the order would be for different purposes and founded on different principles. It would be a pre-eminence in labour and in suffering, not for lordly exaltation; in humble duty, not in the exercise of self-willed authority. He who desires a charge and office in Christ's Church desires that which is good and honourable; only let him remember that it means precedence in laborious painful and humiliating service. Jesus Christ Himself was first of all and above all; but He was first in labour, suffering, and humiliation. Those who hold office under Him must hold it on the same conditions.

The meaning of this teaching of Jesus Christ is expounded very clearly by a later passage in the history of His life recorded in the Gospel of St John, to which, as I have observed before, there is an obvious allusion in the account given by St Luke of this portion of our Lord's teaching. The latter evangelist

relates that, when He reproved the Twelve for their ambition and taught them the true greatness of His kingdom, He added, "For whether is greater, he that "sitteth at meat or he that serveth; but I am amongst "you as he that serveth." St John describes the remarkable act of Jesus Christ to which these words refer. It was one of those symbolical acts by which the divine Teacher was wont to represent truth more vividly and completely than it can ever be represented by mere words. On the night before His crucifixion, when they were gathered for that last supper, which was to be the last Paschal feast of the old covenant and the first of the new, Jesus rose and, as if he were a menial servant, laid aside His upper garments and girded Himself with a towel. He then poured water into the basin provided for such purposes, and proceeded to wash His disciples' feet, and wipe them with the towel which He had bound around Him. Peter resisted what seemed to him an unseemly act of servile labour on the part of his Lord, until he was told that unless he received this service from his Master, he had no part in Christ. Having completed this office for His disciples, Jesus Christ told them that He had here given them an example, what they should do one for another. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the disciple "is not greater than his Lord, nor an apostle" (he that is sent) "greater than He that sent him." The act was a most significant representation of the true duties of the office of an apostle, not in regard to the unclean and unbelieving world, but towards those who are clean through faith in Christ's word. These need to have their feet washed, to have the pollutions contracted day by day cleansed away. And whilst the cleansing power always proceeds from Christ — the

purifying water is derived from Him—yet it is the highest function of the apostolic office to minister these cleansing waters to their brethren. Instead therefore of being an office of ease, or worldly consideration, or of such superiority to others as would gratify flesh and blood, it would be one of humble even menial service, from which their natural feelings might oftentimes revolt.

Thus all office and order in the Church of Christ are widely distinguished from those which exist in worldly kingdoms, inasmuch as they are for the ministration of spiritual blessings, and cannot be fulfilled truly except by those personal offices to men for their spiritual good, which to the world seem degrading and mean, but of which Jesus Christ's ministry is the pattern.

But the order of Christ's Church is contrasted in His teaching not only with that of Gentile kingdoms, but also with that with which His disciples were more familiar, and which ought to have borne a much nearer resemblance to the order of the kingdom of heaven, I mean such as at that time was exhibited in the religious organisation of the Jewish people.*

First of all—and this of itself proves that He is not denying the existence of authority in His Church, but guarding against its abuses—the legitimate authority of the Jewish teachers in their own proper sphere is fully recognised by Him. "The Scribes and the Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid "you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after "their works, for they say and do not."

It must be observed here, that the succession to the office of Moses was of a different nature from succession

Matt. xxiii.

to the priestly office, and far more nearly resembled the succession which we shall hereafter trace in the Church of Christ. The priests sat in the seat of Aaron; but the Scribes and Pharisees sat in the seat of Moses. They were the authorised expounders of the law, not merely recognised by the popular voice and opinion, but teaching under the sanction of the Sanhedrim, the great council of the Jewish Church and nation, which succeeded to the authority of that council of elders which had been constituted by Moses under divine direction. Now what kind of authority was allowed by Jesus Christ to belong properly to the authorised teachers of the synagogue? Undoubtedly, authority in those matters which needed to be decided for the due order and discipline of the body, to enable it to fulfil the purposes for which it was constituted under the divine law. In many things, not the example only but the teaching of Scribes and Pharisees was notoriously not to be followed but to be resisted to the death. But in those matters that belonged to their office, in their own proper sphere, their authority was legitimate and to be obeyed. Jesus Christ however specially marks out those things in which His apostles, who would hold a corresponding office in His Church, must not imitate them. These doctors and teachers of Judaism not only desired self-aggrandisement generally, but specially to be called Rabbi, to be the masters of men's understanding and conscience in religion. And Christ warns His disciples not only against other forms of exaltation, of which the Gentile world presented the most conspicuous and attractive examples, but particularly against presuming to claim this kind of authority over men, which would be, He reminds them, to assume the prerogatives of God their Father and of Christ

their only Master and Teacher. Authority over the conscience is as greedily desired by men as the secular power which He before disclaimed for His kingdom. But this is not the true spiritual authority which He would give to His apostles and to those who should afterwards sit in their seat in His Church. He further proceeds to show how the Scribes and Pharisees, through lusting for this unholy power, and attempting to lord it over men's consciences, had not only overstepped the limits of their own authority, but perverted the truth of God. They had one key of the kingdom of heaven, the key of knowledge; yet they used it not to open the door but to close it; "ye neither go in yourselves, "neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Their profession of superior sanctity was used to gain influence over others for their own advantage. They were zealous in making proselytes who became, as the experience of all ages prove that they do become, worse than their teachers. They misunderstood the precepts of that law which it was their office to expound. They strained out a gnat, but swallowed a camel. They were scrupulous as to external observances, whilst they disregarded the weightier matters of the law. They honoured the memories of martyred saints, but were the true successors of the men who slew them.

We cannot suppose that these burning words of Jesus Christ were merely denunciations of the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees of those corrupt times. The teaching of the Son of God is for all generations, not for one exceptionally evil. These men were but the representatives of an unholy system; or rather, of a system, in itself and its original purpose, legitimate and good, but which, having been perverted to a purpose impious and ungodly, that is to gain power over

the minds and consciences of men, brought forth, as every such perversion must in time, these pernicious and poisonous fruits.

This is not the place to examine whether similar perversion of authority in the Church of Christ has actually produced the self-same fruits. I would only here observe, that no evils whatsoever, no sins of publicans and harlots, are denounced by Jesus Christ with such severity of language, as those are condemned which arise from authority in religious matters abusing its legitimate powers, and transgressing those limits to all derived authority which are determined by the supremacy of God, as the one Lord of the conscience of man, the one Author and source of spiritual truth.

Thus, whilst the true authority of office in the Church is defined and directed by these contrasts, it is guarded on the one side against those dangers which might arise from its being confounded with the authority of secular government, on the other side from the yet greater evils and abuses, to which the exercise of spiritual authority is specially liable.

But simultaneously with this development, in one direction, of fundamental principles of the Church's order, the teaching of Jesus Christ was also expounding to His apostles another aspect of the same truths. The accounts of these portions of Christ's teaching again vary considerably in the three Gospels which record them,* and it seems as if on several occasions the same or similar instructions were repeated, in order to fix them more deeply in the minds of the disciples. Without attempting to harmonise them, I will endeavour to mark out the points which affect our argu-

* Compare Matt. xxiv. 42-51. Mark xiii. 33-37. Luke xii. 35-49; xxi. 34-37.

ment. It appears from the Gospel of St Luke, that some time before the last journey to Jerusalem, Jesus Christ was warning His disciples of the necessity for continued and unceasing watchfulness, that their Lord might not find them unprepared. "Blessed," He adds, "are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh "shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He "shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down at "meat, and will come forth and serve them," even as Jesus Himself did on the subsequent occasion before considered, when He symbolised their duties by His own act. Peter, again speaking for the Twelve, and perceiving that this duty of watching for the coming of Christ might have a somewhat different force for them and for other disciples, asks the question; "Lord, "speakest thou this parable unto us, or also to all?" Jesus gives no direct reply to this question, but He answers it by another question, in which it is implied that the office committed to them did give a special significance to the warnings and the encouragements they had heard. "Who then," He asks, "is the faithful and wise steward, "whom the lord shall set over his household, to give "them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is "that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall "find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he "will make him ruler over all his substance.* But if "that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth "his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants "and the maidens, and to eat and drink and be drunken; "the lord of that servant will come in a day when he "looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not "aware, and will cut him asunder and will appoint "him his portion with the unbelievers." This parable,

* ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτοῦ καταστήσει αὐτόν.

for such in truth it is, we find in its substance in all the three Gospels. As a reply to Peter's question its obvious meaning is, that those, who, like the Twelve, were set by Christ as stewards in the household, must remember that their true watching for the coming of their Lord would consist in the faithful fulfilment of the responsibilities of their office. But there are some significant elements in the typical description of the parable which suggest important truths as to the constitution of the Church of Christ.

We must observe then, first of all, that the appointment to the office of steward in the household is made on the ground of the trustworthiness and the ability of him to whom the office is committed. Thus would every wise earthly master act, not selecting a favourite, or leaving the appointment to chance, or to some hereditary claim,—but promoting one, judged to be faithful and intelligent, to have the management of other servants. This picture of an organised and well-ordered household Jesus Christ adopts to represent the condition of His Church during His own absence. The Twelve had thus been selected by Himself, after long and earnest prayer, as those whom He judged the best fitted of His disciples for the office to which He appointed them. We trace then here a principle of appointment or succession to office in the Church and household of Christ essentially different from that of natural descent, by which the religious organisation was determined under the law; and this principle is, a judgment as to the fitness and the character of him who is appointed to the office. In first constituting His Church, Jesus Christ Himself passed the judgment and appointed to the office; and this of itself distinguished the twelve apostles from all who afterwards

were stewards of the household, making them, next Himself, the original and chief authority. What tribunal should be authorised to exercise judgment, and in the Lord's absence to appoint in His behalf, as the original chief stewards should pass away, as yet is not explained.

Again, the office of the οἰκόνομος is generally the due government of the household, but his special and peculiar work, for which he is responsible to his lord, is to distribute to each servant under his charge his proper measure of food at the proper times. The function of government is implied, but in order to illustrate the most important responsibilities of office in the Church, Christ speaks in the parable of the purpose of the authority given to the steward, as simply that of giving every man his due allowance of food. The steward is proved faithful, and is rewarded at his lord's return, if he is found fulfilling his trust by *feeding* the household: and he is unfaithful, when he abuses the authority intrusted to him for this purpose, in order to interfere with other servants and punish them without cause, and to spend on his own enjoyment that which his master has committed to his charge for the benefit of the household.

Regarding then this parable as the reply to Peter's question, we gather from it a strong additional argument for that objective reality of office in the Church, which has been already apparent in the acts and teaching of Christ. Employment in an office of authority and trust in the household of Christ, involving the interests of others, does materially affect the responsibilities of those who are thus employed and therefore the question of their being prepared for the Lord's coming. "It is required of stewards that a man be

"found faithful." Otherwise the confidence implied by the trust committed to the steward is abused, and many others are injured besides the οἰκόνομος himself. But this responsibility arises entirely from the objective reality of the office. The servant receives the office as being faithful and wise, but his faithfulness and intelligence do not of themselves make him head-servant, or create the responsibilities of the office. Nor do his unfaithfulness and folly lessen those responsibilities when he has been appointed, nor of themselves, without some further act authorised by the master of the household, deprive him of his office.

Lastly, we must observe, that that which to a certain extent determines the results and even the nature of the responsibilities of office in the household of Christ, is the relation between the present state of His Church, as one of service, and the future kingdom. The symbolical language of the parable proceeds on the idea of this relation. The present work is an office in the *familia*, the household of servants (θεράπεια); the reward for the work is the charge of all the master's substance. There is an incipient judgment on the man before his admission to the first; there is then a searching trial of the man's character and conduct in this inferior office, with a view to another far more decisive judgment, before the higher charge is conferred. All is part of the same scheme and system: the Church during the period of labour and probation is the same kingdom of heaven as shall be hereafter revealed, only as yet undeveloped. But the examination of this important truth I must defer to the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM.

It is obvious to every reader of the New Testament that the coming of the kingdom of God, or of heaven, is an expression capable of different meanings, which we determine from the context. The Baptist and Christ Himself proclaimed the kingdom of heaven as at hand: but we still pray, Thy kingdom come. In a certain sense, undoubtedly, the kingdom began in the work of Christ Himself: as described in the earlier parables of Jesus Christ, which we have examined in a preceding chapter, it commenced with the birth of the Christian Church on the day of Pentecost; and again Christ evidently referred to some later era than this as a coming of the kingdom, when He assured His disciples that some of them should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power.

We have indeed, in Christ's teaching, some sufficiently distinct intimations as to the successive phases of the kingdom of heaven in the progress of its manifestation and development. St Luke records * that on one occasion He was questioned by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come? He had now for some years proclaimed the near approach of the kingdom, when were all His predictions to be fulfilled? It

* St Luke, xvii. 20-36.

was a question probably asked by the Pharisees in ironical contempt of His mission, but it was in itself a natural and reasonable question, and it is one to which His teaching supplies different solutions, according to the different senses in which the coming of the kingdom is to be understood. To the Pharisees He replies, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; "neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, be- "hold, the kingdom of God is among you."* That such is the meaning of the last words seems certain from their being addressed to the Pharisees, *within* whom the kingdom of God was assuredly not established. But the kingdom had come among them, was in their midst, and they knew it not. It had already begun in its first elementary form, and its future developments would not be with observation, by events which the world could watch, and distinguish their true meaning, but rather through a quiet and gradual growth. We must not however press these words so far as to conclude, that there would not be from time to time events, intelligible to those who had hearts to understand, which would be marked eras in the progress of the kingdom. The day of Pentecost was notably an era of this kind. The judgment on Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Temple and of the old economy, formed another such era, very distinctly indicated, although a very different coming of the kingdom from that which the Jews expected. But for the Pharisees this answer of Jesus Christ was sufficient. They needed first to believe on Him who had come among them, before any other coming of the kingdom of God could be of any value to them. To His disciples however, in reference to this question of the Pharisees, He said

* ἐντὸς ὑμῶν.

something further. They were to watch and look for the coming of the kingdom and to observe the true signs of its approach, and not to be deceived by false reports. To them He said, "There shall come days, "when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son "of Man and ye shall not see it. And they shall say "to you, Lo here! or, lo there! go not after them nor "follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out "of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other "part under heaven; so shall the Son of Man be in "His day. But first must He suffer many things and "be rejected of this generation." And He proceeds to compare His coming—"the day in which the Son of "Man is revealed"—to the days of Noah and the days of Lot. And to the anxious inquiry of the disciples where these judgments should fall, His brief and comprehensive answer is, "Wheresoever the dead body is, "there will the vultures be gathered together."

Now here Jesus Christ expressly speaks of more than one "day of the Son of Man;" and foretells that His disciples will, from time to time, long for the coming of one of these days, which will be deferred for the trial of faith and patience. And although His description of the coming of the day,—suddenly lighting up the whole heaven,—overtaking men in the midst of their secular pursuits and pleasures,—separating those who are most intimately related,—will doubtless be most completely fulfilled in a day which is still to be revealed, yet His own words would lead us to conclude that every day of the Son of Man would be more or less of this character. The force of His instructions to His disciples is evidently this: that they were not impatiently to be expecting some fresh revelation of Christ, or excited by startling events, but to endure

in all patience and wait for Christ, knowing that His kingdom would silently and steadily develop itself, and that when the time should come for judgment on His enemies, and for a new manifestation of the kingdom, it would take men by surprise, being wholly different from their anticipations or hopes. Such a description of a day of the Lord answers precisely to the destruction of Jerusalem, which without doubt was primarily intended in this counsel to His disciples. The apostolic writings themselves bear witness how full the minds of Christians were of the coming of a day of the Lord; yet when it came, this first revelation of the power of Christ was very different from that which had been expected. But it was in perfect accordance with the economy of God, and as necessary to the progressive development of the kingdom as the last day of the Lord shall be in its season. For as the dead carcass collects the vultures together from the whole heaven, so the body politic, civil and religious, of the Jewish people, having lost all the spirit of life and going rapidly to corruption, summoned the divine judgments to destroy it utterly, lest the air should be tainted with its polluting infection, and it was cleared off the earth that the kingdom of heaven might grow and expand itself in a more wholesome atmosphere; and, henceforward, the Church of Christ, which during the continuance of the Jewish polity was hindered from attaining its mature form and due proportions, assumed,—as we shall find in the latest writings of the apostle whose life was prolonged into this new period of the kingdom,—that more distinct and well-defined organisation which marked a more advanced stage in its development.

Another parable of Jesus Christ, which "He added

"and spake" on His way to Jerusalem, "because He "was nigh to Jerusalem and because they thought that "the kingdom of heaven should immediately appear," points to the same general conclusions. The illustrations in the parable are taken from incidents in political life with which the Jews at that time were familiar. A man of rank goes into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return. Even so princes of the Herodian family had gone to Rome to receive a kingdom from Cæsar. Before he goes, the nobleman calls ten of his servants, and gives to each a small sum of money, and bids them trade with this till his return. His object is not any gain to himself, but to test the fidelity and ability of these servants, that he might know whom to promote to offices of trust and authority in his kingdom. As soon as he has left, his fellow-citizens, amongst whom he was unpopular, send an embassy to protest against his appointment to the kingdom, even as the Jews had sent to Rome to protest against the appointment of Archelaus. However in time the nobleman returns having received the sovereignty. He first calls his servants before him, and rewards them with posts of importance and dignity, according as they had proved themselves worthy of his confidence. The unprofitable servant is punished, but only by the loss of his lord's confidence, and of all intrusted to him. His enemies who had opposed his appointment to the kingdom of the king were to be brought and put to death before him.

Now whatever other fulfilments of this parable remain for the Church of Christ, its primary and, to those whom He addressed, most obvious meaning referred to the events of that day of the Son of Man which then was not far distant. The malicious citizens are evi-

dently in the first instance the Jews, who refused to have Jesus to reign over them and said, We have no king but Cæsar. Their destruction is the overthrow of the Jewish state and polity. Few expositors of this parable can avoid seeing that this must be the primary interpretation of the words of Christ. But if so, it also follows that there must be a primary fulfilment of the rest of the description, in the more developed state of the Church of Christ which followed the overthrow of these enemies of the kingdom. The places of higher trust, and more extended authority, which, in the matured organisation of the Church, those received who were faithful and diligent during the period of Christ's rejection by the Jewish nation, were to be in some limited sense anticipations and earnests of the final reward given after another and severer trial.

The truth, which we thus find illustrated in various forms in Jesus Christ's teaching, of the successive phases of the kingdom of heaven, and its development by successive days of the Lord which in some of their main features would resemble one another, is especially necessary to the right understanding of the last prophetical discourse of Christ which was delivered on the Mount of Olives to His four chief apostles. All must notice how, in that discourse, the predictions of the judgment on Jerusalem, and of a coming of the Son of Man which is yet future, run one into the other, so that it is impossible always to distinguish of which Christ is speaking. The explanation of this, I say, can only be found in the truth, that the one event is as really a day of the Son of Man as the other. The matured form of the Christian Church, which grew out of the destruction of the Jewish Temple, when the polity and ordinances of the Gospel took the place which the polity and ordinances of the

law had before occupied,—was as truly a coming of the kingdom, however inferior in degree, as that great and glorious coming shall be for which we still pray. And therefore to the question, which still is asked by many in the spirit of the Pharisees, When the kingdom of God shall come, the first answer is,—and it is one which except we receive other replies will profit us little,—The kingdom of God is now amongst you.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISTINCTIVE TEACHING OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THE difference between the structure and contents of the Gospel of St John, and those of the first three evangelists, is apparent to every reader. In no respect is that difference more remarkable than in regard to the institution of the Christian Church. No account is given in this Gospel of the appointment of the apostles, nor is the word ever used except in one passage, quoted before, in which our English translators seem to be justified in not giving its technical rendering. Nothing indicates that any supernatural gifts or special powers were bestowed on the chosen Twelve: for the words of Christ, after the resurrection, recorded in this Gospel, which are often quoted as conferring peculiar powers on the apostolic body, were addressed not exclusively to the Twelve but to all the disciples.* The institution of the sacraments is not recorded, nor is there any expression used which declares explicitly, that the kingdom of heaven on earth should have a polity or be an organised society. The charge given by Christ to Peter to feed His sheep arises so directly out of that disciple's profession of love to his Master, that it would be consistent with the pastoral office being merely the subjective result

* See *infra*, Chap. XV. (1.)

and expression of love for Christ. Those who regard the Church as nothing more than the aggregate mass of believers, without any organic life in the body, but with powers resulting from the spiritual life of each individual, would derive their main arguments from the Gospel of St John. Indeed those who ascribe the production and reception of this Gospel to post-apostolic times, have this fatal objection to their theory to explain away, that they suppose a book without the slightest tendency to ecclesiasticism to be the product of an age when strong ecclesiastical tendencies existed among Christians. And yet while this Gospel supplies few of those ordinary arguments for the organisation of the Church, which lie on the surface and may be used for the purposes of controversy, the real principles out of which the corporate life, functions, and ministrations of the Church proceed are by none so fully expounded as by this evangelist.

Before we examine the fourth Gospel with the view of inquiring into these principles, we must first notice the different form in which the revelation of Christ is cast in this Gospel, from that in which it is presented in the other three. In those we have histories of the Saviour's life and teaching, with occasional notices of prophecies fulfilled by Him, and a few brief inferences from the facts. We are left to draw from the history the inevitable conclusions which forced themselves on all impartial eyewitnesses; "Truly this "man was the Son of God." Through the process represented in these Gospels, by which the faith of the first disciples was gradually formed, St John himself also passed. But he lived on into another phase of Christian thought and feeling. The divine person of the Redeemer had then become so distinct in his own

knowledge and in the knowledge of other Christians, that the historical facts were no longer the steps by which their minds ascended to a conviction of His true Godhead, but were rather the manifestations of One who is already known. The object of St John is not to accumulate evidence from which, by induction, certain conclusions may be derived; but, assuming and asserting these conclusions as first principles, to exhibit, confirm, and illustrate the truth in the life and death of Jesus. His Gospel begins therefore in the positive dogmatic truths of the eternal existence and divine personality of the Word made flesh, not as to be proved from the history, but as antecedent realities from which the history itself is to be explained. His Gospel is not a mere summary of events but a history of the revelation of the Son of God in the world. It is evident that, commencing from this standpoint, he might of express purpose select other words and works of Jesus Christ from those which had been recorded in the first Gospels. Nor was it merely as regards the faith that the Christian mind had passed through its state of transition. If reliance is to be placed on external testimony, the Gospel of St John was written subsequently to the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, after that first day of the Son of Man which is predicted in the other Gospels, and which was followed by the more complete organisation of the polity of the Church. St John's later writings—as we shall find—display that polity in its most developed form. Supposing therefore that such questions, as the origin and power of the apostolical ministry, and the functions and office of the Church, were at that time established generally in the minds of Christians, we need not be surprised that the evangelist does not

repeat the history of the institution of the Church, but dwells rather on those profound verities as to the relations between God and man in Jesus Christ, of which the Church is the result and the representation in human life. These underlying principles of Church life St John, more than any other writer, has expounded in acts and teaching of Jesus Christ: they pervade his whole Gospel: they are illustrated by history and doctrine the most varied, and by the most vivid pictures of human life and character; and they are all seen to spring out of the cardinal truth that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, that "the Word was "made flesh and dwelt among us."

I.

Commencing with the eternal Word, who came into the world to be at the same time the Life and the Light of men, the evangelist proceeds at once to speak of His Church. His own people, the sons of Abraham and children of God after the flesh, according to the old law of natural descent, did not receive Him. A new family was formed on a different principle of succession. "To as many as received Him, to them "gave He power" (that is, the right and authority) "to become children of God, even to them that believe "in His name." And their birth into this family was not by carnal descent, or by man's adopting them into the household, or by any principle of natural selection, but from God. And to us, the evangelist adds, speaking of himself as one of the original members of this family, the glory of the incarnate Word was revealed, and out of His fulness did we all receive.

He then proceeds to describe the origin and the growth of this new family of God. John, the forerunner of the true Light, bears witness of Him, and baptises with water, separating men visibly from others in preparation for His coming. He testifies of Jesus, as one infinitely superior to himself; as "the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the "world;" as one that would baptise with the Holy Spirit; as the Son of God. Immediately after this, disciples are gathered to Jesus Christ from those who before were John's disciples. Others were called by Jesus Himself, or brought to Him by those who themselves believed. A miracle wrought at a marriage-feast confirmed the infant faith of these disciples. The family of Christ, in this its most rudimentary form, at once goes forth into human life and society: it is made for man, and is to hallow, by the transforming power of that divine life which resides in its Lord, all the relations of humanity. He comes into the world to supply all its wants, and change its water into wine.

As yet nothing is manifest but the power and glory of Christ, and the growing faith of His disciples. But now the scene changes. The visit of Jesus to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover brings Him into contact with a larger world than in Galilee, and the signs of His supernatural power attract the notice of multitudes. "Many believed on His name when they saw the "miracles that He did." But the evangelist adds, "He "did not commit Himself to them." He did not unreservedly accept their professions of faith, and place Himself at their head. His perfect knowledge of the human heart, which required no testimony from others to teach Him the true motives and characters of men, enabled Him to see that a belief, merely excited by the

novel and startling proofs of a supernatural presence, could not be trusted as of any permanent value.

One, however, whose attention had been arrested by these signs and wonders, ultimately became a faithful disciple, and is a notable representative of a certain class. He was a Pharisee, a celebrated Rabbi, and a member of the Sanhedrim; a sincere inquirer after truth, but cautious and timid, and afraid of encountering the prejudices of his order against a new and, in their opinion, unauthorised teacher. He comes by night to Jesus, and declares that he, with others, was convinced by the miracles that He was a teacher sent by God. This feeble and faltering profession of an uncertain, and somewhat inconsistent, faith is met by Christ with the truth, which the evangelist has placed on the threshold of his history,—that there is a new family of God, for admission into which a new and heavenly birth is needed. In answer to a question, which was probably meant as an objection to this truth, but which expressed the feeling of the old law that succession to the blessings must be by natural descent, Jesus Christ explains that this birth is not of the flesh,—not according to any natural law,—but of water and Spirit.* Of the effect which the Spirit produces in this new birth He says, that as that which is born of the flesh is flesh —for natural descent can convey nothing beyond nature,—so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and what the breath of heaven is in the physical world, unseen and unknown except by its effects, such is the Spirit, the breath of God, in human life. Did not the learned Jewish Rabbi know even thus much? This doctrine of a new birth into the kingdom was but an earthly thing, compared with the profound heavenly

* ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος.

mysteries which the Son of Man had come down from heaven to reveal. How could Nicodemus receive these, if he did not believe Jesus when teaching earthly things?

Of those heavenly truths which lie out of the range of human knowledge, and are exclusively subjects for faith, the argument of this work does not treat; but the doctrine of the birth into the kingdom, as here taught by Jesus Christ, does not include such mysteries. We must not therefore embarrass the subject, of which He here speaks, with questions as to whence the Spirit cometh or whither it goeth: in other words, as to the will of God who sends His Spirit, or the mode of the Spirit's operation, or the permanence of His action. All that concerns us here is as to those spiritual effects which are earthly, proper subjects for the understanding and reason of man. And we must also observe, that this birth into the kingdom of heaven must not be confounded with the moral change, the μετάνοια of which the other Gospels have spoken. John the Baptist preached repentance, but not this new birth. This latter is a blessing which he himself taught that none but the coming Saviour would confer. The baptism of repentance is a baptism of water; the baptism of regeneration is of water and Spirit.

How practically suitable this teaching of Jesus Christ was for the Pharisee and Rabbi, whose highest idea of the coming kingdom was some enlargement of the privileges of the chosen race, born after the flesh, and the extension of such privileges to others by their adoption, as proselytes, into the ancient family of God, need not be here explained. (Compare Part I. Chap. II. p. 40.) But we must observe that another truth was specially required for those who, like Nicodemus, were hoping to

be followers of this new teacher without confessing Him openly before men. I mean, that this new birth should have, like the adoption of the proselyte to which the language of Jesus Christ certainly refers, its outward and visible sign of separation into the new family of God. We not only do violence to the obvious meaning of the words of Christ, but miss the purpose of His teaching, if we give to the words "water and Spirit" any other than their simple and literal meaning. And as if more clearly to show that such is their meaning, the evangelist, after recording this conversation with Nicodemus, at once, as his manner is throughout his Gospel, illustrating the teaching of Christ by His acts, adds that Jesus and His disciples went into the rural districts of Judea; and there He remained and *baptised*. So marked was this symbolical act in the ministry of Jesus Christ, that a question arose between the disciples of John and some Jews as to the meaning and comparative value of the various rites in which water was used as a sign of cleansing, and they came to John, and told him that He, to whom he had borne witness beyond Jordan, was now Himself baptising, and all men, they said, are coming to Him. And at last, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that He was making and baptising more disciples than John, He left Judea, and returned through Samaria into Galilee.

Thus, we find, the author of the Gospel κατὰ πνεῦμα, the expounder of the profoundest spiritual mysteries, first of all recognises, as the other evangelists do, an outward and visible rite as the act of admission into the new family of God, only He connects it more distinctly, through the teaching of Christ, with the effects of the Spirit on the life of man. But the process of the

formation of the family of those who are born of God is not merely by some secret influence changing the minds of men, but those who believe must be baptised in order to be members of the kingdom of heaven; they must be made disciples of Christ both by water and by the Spirit.

II.

And the spiritual evangelist records one very noticeable fact,—of which except for him we should have been ignorant,—that even in the first beginnings of the kingdom of heaven Jesus Christ made use of the ministry of others. "Jesus Himself baptised not but His "disciples." And this baptism, by the hands of those who were authorised by Him, is called a baptism by Christ. This fact in itself, of a symbolical rite administered by disciples of Jesus Christ, under His authority, and as His representatives, embodies the self-same principles of the ministry of the Christian Church as in the other Gospels are represented in other forms. "He "that receiveth you receiveth me." And, "I give unto "thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

There is another intimation of kindred principles, given at an early period of Jesus Christ's ministry, of which St John alone has preserved an account. When the Lord, by his conversation with the Samaritan woman, had commenced a work which was hereafter to bear much fruit, He bade His disciples lift up their eyes and behold the fields that they were white for the harvest already; needing only the labourers to be sent by the Lord of the harvest. The same thought was then present to His mind, as was expressed at the time of the appointment of the Twelve, and afterwards when He sent forth the Seventy. "And," He now continues,

having His mind overflowing with the blessedness of this work, "he that reapeth" will not have to toil in a work unprofitable to himself, but he "receiveth wages "and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that the sower "and the reaper may rejoice together. For in this is the "saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent "you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other "men have laboured, and ye have entered into their "labours." It is evident that Jesus Christ here passes on, in His mind, from the small field in Samaria to the large field of the world which presents itself to Him as whitening for the Gospel harvest. Into this, in purpose, He had already sent forth His disciples,—the greatest blessing He could bestow on them,—to be labourers in a work full of blessing. And what though much of their work would be to reap what others had sown? For example, in this very Samaria, it is probable that the seed sown by Jesus Himself at this time may have been the cause of the plentiful harvest gathered in there after His ascension; and generally their ministry was but the fulfilment of His own, as well as of the ministry of the prophets that went before them; they would not have the glory, which is so much desired by the world, of being original teachers, able to call the whole work their own.* But the work is one, and when it is completed, all who in their several offices and ministries shall have borne any part therein will be partakers of a common joy. Or as the apostle Paul expresses it, entering into the spirit of his Master, "he that plants "and he that waters are one: and each shall receive "his own reward according to his own labour:" for it is God's work, not man's: and all are labourers together

* For a more complete illustration, see Book III. Chap. VI. (I.) on the Conversion of the Samaritans.

with God Himself. This is the great social principle of the Church of Christ, which makes it an organic whole, every member of the body having his separate function, and all necessary one to the other. This principle was present to the mind of Jesus Christ from the first, and was imparted to His disciples as they were able to receive it.

III.

But we must revert to the description given by St John, at the commencement of his Gospel, of the new family of God, as consisting of those that *believe on the name of Jesus Christ*, who receive from Him the right to become the children of God, and are born into the family, not according to any law of natural descent, but of God. Does he mean by this, what we have ascertained from the other Gospels to be intended by the Church of Christ, an organised society visible in the world? or is the idea in his mind that which, in modern theology, is called the invisible and spiritual Church as distinguished from the visible Church? In other words, does he include, in his description of the sons of God, any but those who in the fullest sense are Christ's elect, who endure to the end and are saved? In the solution of this question it is evident we must be guided, not by any theological system, however complete and strictly logical that system may appear to our minds, but by the evangelist himself, who will be the best interpreter of his own language.

We have already seen that the growth of this family of God on earth, as described by St John from its first beginnings, was through the actual separation of men from the world to be followers of Christ, that a secret belief in Him was not sufficient, that the birth into the

family was by water as well as by Spirit, and that the outward and visible rite of baptism was the act by which men were made disciples. But it is evident also that the real meaning of St John's definition of the family must depend very much on the sense which we must attach to these words "believing on His name." The word "believe" is indeed a key-note of the Gospel of St John: it occurs nearly eighty times in that Gospel, and not more than fifteen times in any one of the others. Much of the history is obviously intended to illustrate the different phases of the belief in Christ, which the evangelist had indicated at the outset as the vital principle of the new family. Now we must observe that these very words "believing on His name" are used of those in Jerusalem, whose faith in Christ was a mere temporary conviction of His divine mission, and to whom Jesus did not commit Himself knowing what was in man. A yet more instructive instance is supplied at a subsequent period of the history. The seventh and eighth chapters of this Gospel are, in the main, illustrations of the truth, that "He came unto "His own, and His own people received Him not." In the remarkable conflict between faith and unbelief there described, it is recorded that, after a very emphatic and authoritative assertion by Jesus Christ of His own intimate relation to God His Father, many "believed on "Him." They were overpowered by the authority with which He spoke, and their belief was superior to that which only came from seeing "signs and wonders," inasmuch as it was awakened by the word of Christ, and thus had the first elements of the faith which is the distinguishing mark of the sons of God. "He that "is of God," Christ says, "heareth my words." And we must notice, that, although it was soon proved that

their faith could not stand a trial, yet Christ Himself speaks of their belief as needing *continuance* to give them all the privileges of the family of God. "If ye "abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make "you free." It is evident therefore that the words "believing on Christ" do not in St John's Gospel necessarily involve the idea of a completed and matured principle, by which the conscience is delivered from the bondage of sin, and all the blessings of the family are enjoyed,—in which sense St Paul generally uses the word faith,—but it may be that faith in its most rudimentary and imperfect germ, which through God's grace may, or through the power of evil may not, become in time developed into an active spiritual power. We must not,—as has been observed before,—embarrass the subject by questions as to the deeper mysteries of divine truth which we are wholly incapable of solving; we must deal with it simply as an earthly or human question, and so far as it involves human responsibilities and human motives and principles. Nor on the other hand must we forget that the very first elements of belief in Christ are from the Spirit; as St Paul says, "No "man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy "Ghost." So that whilst St John's Gospel undoubtedly does affirm and expound the truth, that the new family of God is the fellowship of those who believe on the name of Christ, and that only those who believe are born of the Spirit,—or, in the words of the same apostle in his first epistle, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,—yet when we come to examine what belief is, we find it traced up to its very first beginnings, its feeblest action in the mind, in a form so elementary that none but He, who knows all

that is in man and can see the end from the beginning, can discern whereunto it shall grow.

A parable, for such it is, which St John records as part of that last discourse of Jesus Christ to His disciples in which He unfolded to them the promises of the Spirit, throws further light on this subject. In this He represents Himself as the Vine, of which His disciples are the branches; He is not merely the root out of which all spring, but all are included in Him. But in this Vine, — in Christ incorporated in His Church,—there are some branches which bear no fruit, and these are ultimately cut off and cast into the fire to be burned; not however by the hand of man, who would only injure the Vine by his ignorant attempt to improve it by pruning, but by the Father who is the Vine-dresser. And this unfruitfulness of some of the branches is the consequence of their not "abiding in "Christ;" of the elementary belief in Christ, which originally placed them in Him, not growing into that active and abiding faith which derives fructifying power from Christ in the Vine.

We find therefore that the idea of the Church in St John's Gospel is essentially the same as is elsewhere given, although certain aspects of the truth are more fully expounded by him. Indeed St John supplies a very necessary link between the objective and subjective constitution of the Church, by teaching us that the most rudimentary faith, expressed in the symbolical acts by which the Church is visibly constituted, is a reality recognised by Christ Himself. He thus suggests a more complete and exact answer, than any we have obtained elsewhere, to a question as to the limits of the family or Church of Christ in its manifestation on earth. What (we ask) is the sign of that elementary

faith in Christ which entitles a man to be regarded by others as a member of the household of God, which faith, if it do but grow, will bring forth all the fruits by which God is glorified in the Church, and men are distinguished as indeed Christ's disciples? In this Gospel we learn, both from the teaching and the acts of Jesus Christ, that baptism by water of those who profess faith in Christ, and who are judged, by those who are authorised to administer it, qualified for this elementary rite, is the sign and seal of the new birth into the kingdom, the Spirit being the inward power of this new birth, and the water the outward instrument and witness. They who are thus baptised are really grafted into Christ and made branches of the true Vine, either, by abiding in His word, to bring forth fruit unto eternal life, or, by being barren branches, to be fit only for everlasting destruction.

IV.

The parable or allegory of the shepherd and his sheep, in the tenth chapter of this Gospel, is closely connected by its language with much of the teaching both of the Old and the New Testament. The leading idea is the entire dependence of the people of Jesus Christ upon Him alone. He is everything to His sheep; the Door of the Fold, the Good Shepherd, and, as He elsewhere teaches, their very Pasture. But if we should follow the conclusions suggested by the metaphorical language, we must remember that the figure of a flock of sheep emphatically represents a body united together by the government of one pastor, as well as by the strongest gregarious or social instinct. The attempt sometimes made to distinguish between

the flock and the fold in the allegory (v. 16), as if the latter were the enclosure of the "visible Church," while the former is the whole society of the faithful, is singularly unfortunate; since the unity of a flock consists in its being herded together. It may also be added, as a comment on the allegory, that as all who are acquainted with pastoral life well know, sheep and goats are herded together, though they may be placed in separate folds. And it must be remembered that it requires some amount of civilised knowledge to discern that the sheep are the more valuable; to barbarous tribes the goat seems to have the greater value: it has the more intelligence and, when all are herded together, a goat is always the leader of the flock.

But my purpose in referring to this allegory is rather to point out its bearing on that subject of the pastoral office in the Church of Christ, which we have found expounded in other Gospels. For although Jesus Christ here represents Himself as the one absolutely good Shepherd, the only one capable of fulfilling all that His sheep require, yet undoubtedly He here also sets Himself forth as the example and standard for those to whom, as to Peter, He says, Feed and tend my sheep and lambs. And there is one part of the description which supplies a very important addition to those duties and responsibilities of office in the Church, which we gathered from other sources. The good shepherd, when he takes his sheep to the pasture, *goes before them*, and the sheep follow him, knowing his voice. So the pastor appointed by Jesus Christ must not drive the sheep of his flock, nor is it his place to follow them, he must lead; he must, in doctrine as in life, be a "wholesome and godly example and pattern for the "people to follow." "Be thou an example to the

"faithful," St Paul exhorted Timothy, "in word, in "conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." And St John himself in his second epistle, having in his mind, we may well suppose, this language of Jesus Christ, warns the disciples, that "he who is a leader" (ὁ προάγων, such is certainly the true reading), "and "does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, hath not "God."

Other portions of St John's Gospel have been considered in former chapters or will be examined afterwards. In this chapter, I only show that although this history of Christ's life and teaching is cast in a different form from the rest, yet the same truths as to the constitution of the Church of Christ underlie its spiritual and heavenly doctrine, which, far from contradicting them, is necessary to their interpretation. Indeed the revelation of Jesus Christ, as the Word of God made flesh and dwelling among us,—which is the main purpose of this Gospel,—is also the revelation of the truth as to His Church. For as He is very God, the society and fellowship which, to anticipate St Paul's language, is His body, must be not such as is formed by the will of man, or by natural causes, but the very temple of God. And yet as He is really man, and no unsubstantial appearance of man,—which it is also the purpose of this Gospel to expound, — therefore the fellowship of which He is the Head, and which is constituted in Him, must be a real human society, not differing in its nature from other human societies, but liable to be confounded with them by those who judge "after the flesh." There must be no confusion of the deity and humanity therein; it is no less human, because it is the body of Christ.

This great truth however will be unfolded afterwards in apostolic teaching: it would not be in accordance with our argument to pursue this analogy further, or to reason from such a principle, and by a process of deduction determine thence the true constitution of the Church of Christ. But the connection between the constitution of the person of the incarnate Word, and that of His Church, is so intimate and so necessary, that it is impossible for the mind adequately or truly to realise the one without the other.

CHAPTER X.

CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM.

THERE is one question of much importance in the constitution of the Church of Christ, which He Himself decided, sufficiently for our guidance, not long after He had first revealed to Peter and the other disciples the foundation of the Church; but I have reserved it for this chapter, because the teaching of St John's Gospel throws much additional light upon the subject. Under the economy of the old law, in which succession to the blessings of the covenant was by natural descent, the seal of the covenant was administered to the infants of the chosen nation, they being by their birth members of the family to which the promises were given. But we certainly have no right to infer hence that, in the kingdom of heaven, in which the inheritance follows a very different law, baptism, the seal of admission, would be given to infants. We cannot assume that what was consistent with the old carnal dispensation would be in accordance with the new spiritual economy. The argument that if it were not so, the grace of the Gospel would be inferior to that of the Law, is nothing to the purpose: it is a mere sentiment, which proves nothing. We have to show that infants are fit subjects for baptism, for we have seen that this rite was administered, under the authority of Jesus

Christ, to such as were judged to be qualified for admission into the kingdom. And at first sight the objection seems plausible, that since infants cannot believe, therefore they cannot be members of this new family of God. But this objection Jesus Christ Himself so emphatically answered, that we have not to depend on any reasonings of our own. They brought to Him, we learn, little children (St Luke calls them "babes," τὰ βρέφη), that He might lay His hands upon them and pray; but the disciples rebuked those that brought them. What claim, they asked, had infants, incapable of understanding the first principles of the kingdom of heaven and believing on Jesus as the Christ, to the blessings of the kingdom? That their objection was of this nature is evident from the reply which Jesus Christ, as His manner was, gave to their thoughts. He was moved with indignation (ἠγανάκτησεν, it is the only occasion on which this word is used of Christ) at the ignorance of the first truths of His kingdom which such conduct of the disciples displayed; and He said, "Suffer the little "children to come unto me and forbid them not; for "of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto "you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom as a "little child, shall not enter therein." It is therefore decided by the authority of Christ, that infants, instead of being disqualified for the kingdom, have the truest qualification: and therefore the act of admission into the kingdom, which is to be administered to those judged qualified for such admission, ought without doubt to be administered to infants.

But the force of this decision of Jesus Christ will not be apprehended without considering what this qualification is. The meaning of His words, as gener-

ally explained, that humility dependence and docility are the first things needful, is indeed sufficiently obvious. To understand however why this is a special qualification for the family of Christ, we must observe that the original name of those of whom this family is composed is μαθηταί, disciples, not those who have learnt but who are learners. We shall find that this term is extended to the whole work of the extension of the Church: "Go and make disciples of all "nations, baptising them." For the initiatory rite of this state of discipleship is baptism. Since therefore little children are the very type of those who are suited to be learners, they are suited to be made such from the first by the initiatory rite. And, further, that the faith expressed in bringing them to be baptised is really tantamount, as regards admission into the kingdom, to that elementary germ of faith, in those who are of mature age, which seeks admission, is sufficiently shown by Jesus Christ's accepting it as such. They bring children to Christ, and He takes them in His arms, lays His hands on them and blesses them. So that although infants have no right because of their birth from those who are disciples,—and to make the right depend on the parentage of the children, that is upon a succession by natural descent, is to confound the Gospel with the Law,—yet as being qualified for the rite, and being brought to be sealed with the seal of discipleship, children are rightly grafted into Christ and made members of His Church and household.

Christian childhood is indeed the simplest form of the *ecclesia discens*, in which faith is only receptive, not even discriminating, much less didactic. As faith grows it first of all becomes exercised* to discern be-

* Heb. v. 12-14.

tween good and evil, and then qualified to teach others also. But in reference to the highest and deepest truth, the purely receptive faith is the only genuine faith. Therefore Jesus Christ said, "I thank Thee, "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid "these things from the wise and prudent, and hast "revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, because "it seemed good in Thy sight." And again, when the Pharisees were indignant because the children in the courts of the Temple joined in the cry, "Hosanna to "the Son of David," and when they contemptuously pointed out to Him of what kind His followers were, He replies, "Yea, have ye never read, Out of the "mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected "praise?" Jesus Christ therefore does not merely take children as the type of a spiritual character, but includes children themselves among those to whom the worship of His Church belongs.

I do no more here than briefly indicate, how infant baptism, in this view of it, stands in close connection with the office of the Church as the appointed teacher, the *ecclesia docens.* For by whatever agencies the office of teaching is fulfilled, it is clearly the responsibility of those who bring infants to Christ on the one hand, and of the Church itself who by its ministers receives them on the other, to provide that their baptism shall be really the beginning of discipleship, in other words to make provision for the Christian education of baptised children. The office of sponsors is simply the expression of this principle.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

At an early period of Jesus Christ's ministry we find that He intimated that the old forms of religious life would be unsuited for the new life of the Gospel; that there must be new bottles for the new wine. And the metaphor implies that the forms,—those at least which would be necessary in order to contain and preserve the new life,—would not be the mere outgrowth of the life, but must be prepared and appointed that the wine when ready might be kept therein. We have already seen that baptism by water has been taken by Jesus Christ as one of these forms; also that a simple but most comprehensive form of prayer was given as the standard for the worship of His Church. The constitution of the apostolic body was itself a form, in the sense in which I here use the word; it was to the inner life of the Church what the body is to the spirit. As the time drew nigh, when the work of Jesus Christ and His revelation of Himself as the Redeemer of men should be consummated by the sacrifice of the cross, He ordained that which, on all accounts, is the highest and most significant form in which the spirit of that life, which is by faith in Christ crucified, is embodied and expressed.

The paramount importance of this ordinance to the

life of the Church is apparent from the repeated and complete testimony given to its institution in the New Testament. Not only is this described in detail by those who were eyewitnesses, but an independent account is also given by the apostle Paul, to whom it was expressly revealed by Jesus Christ. And in St John's Gospel, which contains no history of the institution itself, there is (in the sixth chapter) a record of acts and teachings of Christ, which expound, more fully and distinctly than any other subject is expounded throughout the whole Gospel, the spiritual truths which the ordinance embodies. But these truths, which lie out of the range of the human understanding, do not fall within the limits of our argument.

We must however consider carefully the indications given in the institution of this ordinance,—which soon became known by the technical name of the Lord's Supper,—of its being intended by Jesus Christ to be a rite in His Church corresponding to rites of the Old Testament economy; that is, to be not merely a personal expression of faith and love, but a corporate and representative act. We learn from the history, that in the evening before Jesus was betrayed to be crucified, He with the Twelve celebrated the Paschal feast in an upper chamber at Jerusalem. The circumstances are recorded with great minuteness of detail by the evangelists, but one difficulty respecting it the history does not enable us to solve,—I mean, how it could have been in the strict sense of the word the Passover, when a comparison of the several accounts seems to prove beyond doubt that the following day was the appointed time for the Paschal celebration. At all events, the meaning of this ordinance of the old law being observed by the Lord with His disciples before His passion is obvious from

His own words: "With desire have I desired to eat "this Passover with you, before I suffer; for I say unto "you, I shall not any more eat thereof until it be ful- "filled in the kingdom of God." Now the Passover was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, so far as the death of the Paschal lamb was concerned, by Christ's death upon the cross. But that which specially distinguished the Passover from all other sacrifices was this, that the lamb was slain, not to be consumed on an altar, but that the whole might be eaten. What then would be the fulfilment in the kingdom of God of this essential and distinctive part of the Passover? Certainly when, as they were eating of the Paschal lamb, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is being given (διδόμενον) for you; and when He took the cup of which they had before drunk as part of the Paschal ceremonial, and again having given thanks gave this to them saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my "blood of the new covenant" (the old now passing away) "which is being shed for you and for many for the re- "mission of sins,"—it would be impossible for the disciples to conclude otherwise than that the partaking of this bread and wine was to be to them in the kingdom of God, what the Paschal solemnity was in the old economy.

But there were other words, preserved in St Luke's Gospel and in St Paul's account of the institution, which expressly marked this as a perpetual ordinance in the Church. After the bread, He said, "This do in "remembrance of me." And after the cup (St Paul records), "This do as oft as ye drink thereof in remem- "brance of me." Much learning has been expended on the attempt to prove that the words τοῦτο ποιεῖτε mean

"offer this sacrifice." But no one who does not wish to strain language will fail to observe, that in order that ποιεῖτε, which has the simple meaning of performing an act, may have the sense of offering a sacrifice, the act to be performed must be a sacrifice, which is the very point at issue. And further it must be known, in order that the word may have the sense intended by those who advocate this rendering, that those who perform the act are sacrificing priests, which also has to be proved. And there is this fatal objection to the rendering, that even if it were assumed that the Twelve had been already appointed by Christ to offer sacrifices, here they are addressed as *recipients* not as *givers* of the bread and wine; Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me: and again, Drink ye all of this:—Do this, as oft as ye drink (ὅσακις ἂν πίνητε, not when others are about to drink, but when ye yourselves actually drink), in remembrance of me. The act, therefore, which is to be done in remembrance of Christ, is that which is common to all Christians, namely, eating the bread and drinking the wine.

On the other hand it is undoubtedly true, and confirmed by all the passages quoted as authorities for the forced rendering to which I have referred, that if, as appears from the history, this new ordinance of the Gospel was intended by Jesus Christ, and perceived by His disciples, to take the place of the Passover under the old law, then these words, and no other, would be used as a command to the disciples to continue this symbolic rite as an ordinance in the Church. To keep the Passover is, in the language of the New Testament, ποιεῖν τὸ πάσχα; that is, not to slay the Paschal lamb which is θύειν, nor merely to eat it which is φάγειν, but to celebrate the ordinance. We may therefore

legitimately, and in full accordance with the context, give to the words "Do this," the more definite and at the same time the more comprehensive meaning, "Keep "this ordinance."

Again, the purport of the command is further defined by the additional words εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν, which we render "in remembrance of me." But there are two senses in which an act may be in remembrance. One is, subjectively, as regards my own mind, as I may look at a likeness or gift to revive in my own feelings memories of the past. The other, objectively, as regards others besides myself,—though not excluding myself,—as a memorial, or representative commemoration, as the Sabbath was of creation, and the Passover of the deliverance of Israel. The latter is not a mere expression of personal feeling, but a public testimony before God and man. That the language of Christ most naturally bears the objective sense, appears from the use of the word elsewhere in the New Testament, where it describes (Heb. x. 3) the public representative remembrance of sins once a-year by the sacrifices on the day of atonement. St Paul indeed determines the sense beyond a doubt, for he expressly explains the words.* "For," he says referring to these words, "as oft as ye eat this bread and "drink the cup, ye do show forth" (καταγγέλλετε, ye publish) "the Lord's death till He come."* But again, we must notice, whilst the memorial is public, it is in eating the bread and drinking of the cup, that the ἀνάμνησις or καταγγελία consists.

Concluding then, as must be concluded from the account of the institution of this ordinance, that it is given as the rite in His Church, in which His disciples

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

are not only to feed on His flesh and blood through faith in Him, but also, by their participation therein, to represent and bear public witness to the sacrifice of the cross; and that therefore this ordinance is pre-eminently the new form appointed to contain and preserve the new life;—it becomes very important to consider what are the essential parts of the ordinance as instituted by Christ Himself. There were no doubt certain accidents in the first Lord's Supper, which were due to the transition state of the Church at that time. It was then grafted on the Passover, which was not as yet abolished; it preceded the sacrifice of which it was to be the representative rite. But there are certain distinctive features which cannot be separated from it, and the fact of there being no express rules given to determine the manner of observing the ordinance (for the ordinances of the kingdom are not by law) makes it none the less but even the more necessary, that we should preserve carefully the characteristic elements of the ordinance, lest the form should be an empty ceremony, or at all events should not fulfil the purposes for which it is given. St Paul reminds the Corinthians,* that the mere coming together in one place to eat bread and drink wine is not necessarily to eat the Lord's Supper. It may be degraded, as was the case there, into nothing but a common meal. We may gather, by a comparison of the different accounts, the following conclusions as to the several parts of this great symbolic rite of the Church of Christ.

1. The *elements* are bread and wine. To insist either on this bread being unleavened, because only unleavened bread was used in the Passover, or on the wine being mixed with water, because the ancients

* 1 Cor. xi. 20.

seldom drank wine unmixed, is evidently to confound accidents with essentials. The bread, leavened or unleavened, is the produce of the earth, prepared by fire as the usual daily food of man, the "staff of life;" the wine, Jesus Christ Himself, who by His miraculous power changed water into wine, calls the fruit of the grape.

2. The *action* consists, on the one hand in taking bread and wine,—in an act of blessing or thanks to God,—in breaking the bread,—and giving the bread and the wine as the body and blood of Jesus Christ; and on the other hand, in taking, eating, and drinking.

3. The *minister* in the original Lord's Supper was Christ Himself. In the miraculous feast, described in the sixth of St John, which was evidently intended as a representative type of the feeding on His body and blood, Jesus took the loaves, and distributed to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. The fundamental idea is a supernatural gift coming from Jesus Christ, either directly, or through those whom He appoints to represent Him. Unless therefore the form embodies this truth, its character is changed, and it is no longer the rite as instituted by Christ for His Church; it may be a commemorative feast, an act of praise and worship, profitable for reviving in the minds of Christians the remembrance of His sacrifice, and so means for feeding on Him by faith, but it has not that characteristic of the original ordinance which distinguishes it from any common meal, for which we give thanks and ask God's blessing.

On the other hand we must observe that the idea of an offering made to God,—the fundamental idea of true sacrifice, both in patriarchal times and under the law,—is not expressed in the New Testament history of the

rite except so far as εὐλογία and εὐχαριστία imply a spiritual offering. I do not enter into the question whether, in order to represent more distinctly the idea of a gift from God, a prefatory offering of the bread and wine may not be suitable. But in the original ordinance the idea is represented by the person of the minister, and ideas not contained in the typical form, however consistent with it, are certainly introduced by this additional symbol.

With regard to the whole question of the relation of this ordinance to a sacrificial act, which we must consider more fully when we examine the teaching of Christ's apostles, we must bear in mind, that as first instituted by the Lord Himself, it was the *Passover* of the new economy. And, although the ordinary word for sacrifice is used of the Passover, yet this was because the Paschal lamb was slain,* and not because that rite had any other element in common with the sacrifices or offerings under the law. It was instituted before the law and the priesthood, and was not necessarily connected with them. Certain modifications of the ordinance, and additions to it, were appointed when the law was given, but it still retained, in its main features, its independence of the Levitical system. Although the lamb was brought to the Temple to be slain, yet the head of each family who brought the lamb was ordinarily the sacrificer, and that part of the festival to which the Lord's Supper has succeeded, the eating of the lamb, took place in each family or separate Paschal company, the master of the house or the family head being the master of the sacred feast. The

* The word θύειν is frequently used in the New Testament for slaying for food. Cf. Matt. xxii. 4; Luke, xv. 23, 27, 30; John, x. 19; Acts, x. 13.

sacredness of the whole people of Israel, and of the family relations was thus expressed in the rite; but it is not strictly correct to say that the father of the family acted as priest, because the true function of the priest, that of making an offering to God for others, was not required for the Paschal feast, and could not have been exercised by any other than one of Aaron's seed without a violation of the law.

It is, at all events, a significant fact that the one representative ordinance of the old economy, for which the office of the Levitical priesthood was not needed, was selected by Jesus Christ as the rite out of which the great representative ordinance of the Gospel should grow. At the same time, in the kingdom of heaven, it is taken out of the sphere of the natural family and placed in that of the new family of God, the relations of which are formed, not by natural descent but according to spiritual principles. The fathers in this new family are not to be determined by age and natural paternity, but yet, we shall find, the very name of elders (πρεσβύτεροι) will be transferred to them.

We learn however other lessons from the Passover of the old law. The original Passover in Egypt was undoubtedly, in substance, identical with that which was observed, after the complete organisation of the religious polity, even to the times of the New Testament, and by Jesus Christ Himself. And yet the simple rite, as first instituted, was developed into a much more elaborate service, with some ceremonial additions, and some modifications of its external form. In its first institution, they were directed to eat it standing, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hand; all which had special reference to the origin of the rite; but Jesus Christ and His disciples

reclined, with no outward sign of distress and haste, at the table. Again several cups of wine formed part of the feast in later times, as we learn from Jewish writers, and gather from the New Testament itself. A special service of praise from the Book of Psalms was sung, as the Gospel history intimates,* and the head of the family read and expounded Holy Scripture. Now as the Jewish Church thus expanded the Paschal rite from its original form, either by the express direction of God, or by its own inherent authority, in order to give as much solemnity as was possible to the ordinance without obscuring its true meaning, so we might reasonably expect that the simple form of the Lord's Supper, as originally instituted and observed in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, would be, as the great religious ordinance of the Christian Church, expanded in its ritual into a form, outwardly somewhat different even when in substance identical, and that this development of the form would be necessary for its adaptation to the altered external circumstances of the Church. As the most magnificent cathedral is but the upper chamber in another shape, if Christ is there and the Father is worshipped through Him alone, so is the most elaborate service of the Eucharist the same as the simple breaking of bread,—if only nothing is added which alters the meaning of the ordinance as given by the Lord Himself, nothing omitted which is necessary to its full significance.

* Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark, xiv. 26.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROMISES OF THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

In the prophecies of the Old Testament, the promise is repeated, under several forms and at divers times, that in the latter days the Spirit of God would be given to His servants as it had never been before given. In some of these predictions (*e.g.*, Joel, ii. 28), it is implied that this gift of the Spirit would be in some sense universal, and that powers which before were peculiar to prophets or other inspired men would become the inheritance of all God's people. As the times of the kingdom drew nigh, the Baptist pointed to Jesus as one who not only Himself possessed the Spirit without measure, but who would baptise men with the Holy Ghost. These promises, however, were but gradually expounded by Jesus Christ in His ministry, for the gift of the Spirit was the result and consummation of His work. He assures His disciples that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him. He encourages His apostles with the promise that the Spirit of their Father would speak in them. But, towards the close of His ministry, the promises become more distinct. On the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, within six months of His crucifixion, it is recorded by St John that He stood, probably in some public place in the Temple, and cried saying, "If any man thirst

"let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth "on me (as the Scripture hath said) out of his belly "shall flow rivers of living water. And this" (the evangelist adds) "spake He of the Spirit, which they "that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy "Ghost was not yet given,* because that Jesus was "not yet glorified."

There can be little doubt that this public proclamation of a spiritual gift, to be bestowed on every believer on Christ, referred to one of the solemnities during the feast of Tabernacles, that of bringing water from the pool of Siloam and pouring it out near the altar. And this ceremony was, without doubt, founded on promises of the Old Testament, such as that in Isaiah (xliv. 3), "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods "upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on thy "seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Sometimes also the prophecies of these spiritual waters of life described them as rivers coming forth from the Temple and refreshing and vivifying the earth.† Jesus Christ, alluding to these promises of Holy Scripture, declares Himself to be the source of these waters of life and at the same time gives a new and wider meaning to the promises. He expounds the Temple of God as the figure of those that should believe on Him. He promises, not only that every one who comes to Him shall quench his own thirst, but that from those who themselves receive the gift the streams of the waters of life shall flow forth for the refreshment and restoration of others. And thus Solomon in his Proverbs‡ had spoken of the mouth of the righteous as a well of life, and of the well-spring of wisdom as a

* Οὔπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα ἅγιον. Cf. Acts, xix. 2, 3.
† Ezek. xlvii. 1-12. ‡ Prov. x. 11; xviii. 4.

flowing brook. The promised gift of the Spirit therefore was not merely to satisfy the spiritual wants of men, but also, and specially, to make believers on Christ capable of communicating to the world the same spiritual blessings. And St John, in interpreting the words, expressly declares that this promise was not fulfilled till after the ascension of Christ: as yet, he says, the Spirit was not, in the sense in which Christ promised the gift, that is, as a power given to those that believe to become sources of spiritual blessings. Such language cannot be satisfied by the explanation, that after the ascension miraculous gifts were conferred on the disciples. Christ speaks here, not of some powers over the natural world, but of gifts of peace and truth, of wisdom and righteousness, coming forth from His Church for the life of the world: and St John declares that these *were* not, at the time when Christ spoke, as they were after He had ascended to glory, taking our human nature into the presence of God.

The full exposition of this promise of the Spirit was given by Jesus Christ in His last discourse to His disciples on the night before He suffered.* The promises were then enlarged, branching out in various directions, and connecting themselves with all the responsibilities and duties with which the disciples were intrusted, and therefore they form a most necessary element in our investigation of the constitution and powers of the Church of Christ. We must endeavour to ascertain the true force and purpose of these promises by carefully analysing the language in which they were conveyed.

Those to whom this discourse was addressed were,

* St John, xiv. xv. xvi.

without controversy, "the eleven," that is all the twelve apostles except the traitor Judas. The primary object of the Saviour was to comfort and strengthen their hearts. "Let not your heart be troubled." They were disturbed, not only by the mysterious and now accumulating indications of their Lord's speedy departure from them, but also by the discovery that one of their own number was a traitor to his Lord, and by the warning that Peter himself, the first of the apostles, would even during that very night deny Christ. Where were they to look, on whom could they rely? Their faith as to the future was shaken to its foundation; all the hopes which had been gathering strength during the last three years seemed to be failing them. Now, in order to understand aright what Jesus Christ said to them at such a time, we must observe that the eleven who were with Jesus during these solemn hours were in several senses representative men. They were "*the disciples;*" in them was represented the whole body of the disciples of Christ, of all those whom in this discourse he describes as the branches of the true vine. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Again they were not only disciples, but *faithful* disciples; they were those who were "clean through His "word," now that he, whom Jesus had indicated as the unclean among them, had departed; they were men who were in spirit not of the world, and who would by their spiritual perceptions recognise the Spirit of truth. Thus they were representatives of all "spiritual men," of all who are Christ's disciples indeed, and know and love His truth. And lastly they were the chosen witnesses of Jesus Christ, appointed by Him to a special office in His Church. In them therefore were also represented all who should hereafter partake of

their office and ministry to the end of the world. These distinctions being observed, the difficulty of applying correctly the promises given to the eleven is much diminished. For those promises which concerned them as disciples, as "learners," must concern all disciples. Such as refer to their love and faithfulness to Christ, belong to all those who love Him and keep His commandments. Finally, such as relate to their office, as witnesses for Christ, must include all those who participate in the same office, in such measure as its functions may be committed to them.

The discourse, I have observed, commences with the primary view of strengthening the hearts and reviving the hopes of the faithful few gathered round their Lord during the last hours of His earthly life. Soon His solemn and most divine words begin to unfold forms of truth new and unexpected, shedding a light from heaven, of which before but few broken rays had dawned upon them, and revealing to them that the departure of their Lord, instead of being a loss, would be unutterable gain.

"He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall "he do also; and greater works than these shall he "do, because I go to my Father."

What were these greater works? Those works which Jesus Himself had wrought, as proofs that He was in the Father and the Father in Him, the apostles had already wrought in some measure even whilst their Lord was with them, and these powers were to be continued by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. But other works, which they were to be enabled to perform through His going to His Father, would be greater works than His. And yet certainly not greater in degree, for no miracle wrought by the apostles ever

surpassed, or equalled, that of raising Lazarus from the grave after he had been four days dead. But they would be works of a higher order: truly spiritual powers, working in human life and the human conscience mighty effects, such as the ministry of Jesus Himself did not produce. And yet, as He proceeds to teach them, these works of His disciples would still be His works, they would be answers to their prayers to the Father in the name of Christ, and He Himself would do them as really, through their agency, as when He was on earth in the flesh. And this is explained further. If they loved Christ, let them keep His commandments: and then, as the result of His intercession, the Father would give them another Comforter, instead of Him whom they feared they were losing, and that, not to be with them for a few short years, but to abide with them for ever. Jesus Christ evidently does not mean here, that if the disciples loved and obeyed Him during the short period before the day of Pentecost, then the Holy Spirit would be given. But the gift is regarded as a continued and perpetual supply, the constant outflow from the unceasing intercession of Christ, and the response to the love and faithfulness of His disciples: the actual reception of the Spirit ever being according to the spiritual capacities of man. And by this Spirit His true disciples would still behold Jesus Christ, though invisible to the world, and would be partakers of His life, and have Him dwelling in them. This Spirit therefore Christ calls another Comforter, because He would cheer and strengthen the disciples, as Jesus Himself had done, only yet more effectually; and the Spirit of truth, because these effects would be produced through His revelation of the truth. And this truth, which He

would reveal, would enable them to know, as they could not now know, not only that the Father is in the Son, but also that they are in Christ, and He in them.

Again, after speaking further of this mutual fellowship, He tells them that these things He had spoken while remaining with them, but that the Comforter, whom the Father would send in His name, would teach them all things, and would bring to their remembrance all things which Jesus Himself had said to them. There would be therefore two parts of this work of the Spirit, as the Spirit of truth: He would enable them to record and teach others correctly the whole teaching of Jesus Christ; and He would add other things of which Christ had not spoken.

Again, after the parable of the vine, in which the Church is represented as a tree with both fruitful and barren branches, and after warnings and precepts springing out of this truth,—He proceeds to speak of the hostility of the world to Himself and to His disciples, and in regard to the inexcusable sin of those who saw His works and yet rejected Him, He adds, "But when the Comforter shall come, whom I will "send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, which "proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me. "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been "with me from the beginning." Here we must notice, —for we shall find these words exactly fulfilled in the future history of the Church,—that there is a twofold witness to Christ; first, the Spirit would bear witness, that is, by miraculous gifts, and other evidences of His presence, as well as by the truth He would reveal; secondly, the apostles themselves, who had been with Jesus from the beginning, and had seen His mighty

works, and known Him as the word of life manifested in humanity, would also bear witness.* There is a divine and supernatural testimony given by the Spirit; there is also a human testimony, cleared of all errors by the Spirit, yet still human, given by the apostles.

But once more the promise is repeated in yet larger terms and with more exact distinctions. The disciples were overwhelmed with sorrow because their Lord was leaving them, but the Comforter would more than supply the want of Christ's bodily presence. When He should come He would demonstrate truth, and refute the errors of the world, by incontrovertible proofs (ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον). If our Gospel be hid, to use the words of one inspired by this Comforter, it is among those who are perishing through wilful blindness that it is hidden. The clearest evidence will not convince those who refuse to be convinced, but their incapacity does not invalidate the proofs. And the sphere of this demonstration of truth by the Spirit would be threefold. First, as regards *sin:* it would be proved that the sin of the world consists first of all in unbelief. Of other sins the world is convinced by conscience and by law; to bring home to them, as on the day of Pentecost, the special guilt of the sin of unbelief is the first office of the Spirit of truth. Again, as regards *righteousness;* it would be proved, that there is a righteousness for men, very different from that which they seek through works of the law, the result of Christ's going to the Father, and being there, in the unseen world, our righteousness before God. Lastly, as regards *judgment.* Judgment implies first discrimination, and then a judicial sentence, and it

* Cf. Acts, xv. 28: ἔδοξε τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν; and Heb. ii. 3, 4.

is exercised on actions, motives, and persons. The world had a defective standard and therefore judgment was perverted. Conscience ought to give the rule, but it is obscured by concupiscence. The law, though holy, just, and good, is insufficient because it is law. The Spirit would convict the world of false judgment and would manifest the judgment of God. And this demonstration as to judgment would be founded on the judgment of the prince of this world, who is condemned and cast out by the death of Jesus Christ.*

This description of the work of the Spirit after the ascension of Christ points to a class of truths, which He had Himself never taught His disciples, except by passing and obscure intimations. And this was not because these truths,—which are the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel as taught for example by St Paul,—were not present to the mind of Jesus Christ Himself, or because they were of less value to His Church than those which He revealed,—for indeed they were to be the great power in the contest between the Church and the world. But His disciples were not yet able to bear such advanced knowledge. They had learnt from Him, by His words and works, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God; that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him; but until His death, resurrection, and ascension should be accomplished, they were not prepared to receive the further revelation of these evangelical doctrines. Christ therefore would teach them these new and final truths by His Spirit. "When He, the Spirit of truth, shall "come, He shall guide you into the whole truth; for "He shall not speak from Himself; but as many

* John, xii. 31.

" things as He shall hear, He shall speak, and the " things that are coming He shall declare to you."

Of the fulfilment of this promise of Christ, we have sufficient evidence in the writings of the apostles, including the Apocalypse, the complete and final revelation of τὰ ἐρχόμενα. The whole truth necessary for the ἔλεγχος of the world was by the Spirit manifested to them, and by them preached to the world.

Reviewing then the various promises as to the Holy Spirit given in this His last discourse, we find that the effects of this gift of the Comforter may be thus classified.

1. Works such as those which Jesus Himself wrought as the evidence that He was the Son of God.

2. Power given to the disciples to fulfil their office as eyewitnesses of Christ's life and to record His teaching truly.

3. Direction into truths of a different order from those which Jesus had taught, necessary to convince the world as to sin, righteousness, and judgment.

4. Revelation of future things.

5. Manifestation to the spiritual vision, by means of spiritual truth, of Jesus Christ Himself.

6. A participation of the very life of Christ Himself by a spiritual union.

7. A spiritual power enabling the disciples to do works greater than those of Christ Himself, being in the moral and spiritual world what those were in the physical world.

I give these, not in the natural order in which they are presented in the discourse, but so arranged that we may better distinguish them. The question is now, how far these gifts of the Spirit were limited to the disciples addressed by Jesus Christ, and how far they

belong to those in every age whom they represented. Generally we observe that the Comforter is sent that He may abide for ever, and therefore all results of the presence of the Spirit of truth which are required for the fulfilment of His mission, and which are not, in the nature of things, for a season only, must be continued in every age.

First then, the lesser works of the Spirit, the miraculous gifts, had a special and well-defined purpose. Jesus Christ wrought miracles to manifest Himself and confirm His own word. His apostles and first disciples were endowed with these miraculous gifts as the evidence to the world that their testimony was true. But the necessity for such external evidence gradually ceased, as the truths by which the world would be convinced unfolded themselves under the Spirit's teaching. These truths were to be demonstrated, not by the force of authority, and therefore not by signs and wonders, but by proofs addressed to the reason of man. The evidence passed into a higher sphere of man's being, and the continuance of these lesser powers of the Spirit became not only superfluous but altogether inexpedient.*

Again the aid of the Spirit, enabling them to remember the teaching of Jesus, was in the nature of things limited to those who heard that teaching.

The guidance into the whole truth would be necessary until all the truths, by which the world is to be convinced and the Church comforted, should be taught by Jesus Christ through His Spirit. And the power of foretelling future events is also limited to those things which it is the purpose of Christ to reveal. Indeed, as regards both of these, there is no promise of a power to solve all questions that the prurient curiosity of man may

* See Part III. Chap. XII., On Spiritual Gifts.

raise, either as to the truths which the Church teaches, or as to the future. An infallible living judge or tribunal, by which all questions of doctrine may be determined, is not only not implied in this promise of divine guidance, but is expressly excluded; for the Spirit only teaches that which He Himself receives from Christ. The knowledge of truth, and the knowledge of future events, are in the same category. Neither the one nor the other is unlimited. Many things "the Father hath "kept in His own power."

The question, therefore, as to the limits of the truth, which is revealed by the Spirit, and which is necessary for the work of Christ and His Church in the world, is, like that of the revelation of things to come, a question as to a matter of fact. External evidence is necessary to determine this, even as the evidence of the works of Christ was required to prove that He was in the Father and the Father in Him. The truth therefore must be attested by supernatural powers, such as those which Jesus Christ Himself exercised, and which shall be the testimony of the Spirit to His own revelation. So indeed the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expressly teaches, in a passage to which I have already referred as indicating the distinction between the witness of the Spirit and that of the apostles. He reminds the Hebrews, that the salvation which was revealed, "at the "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was con- "firmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also "bearing additional witness with them" (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος) "by signs and wonders, and divers powers, and "gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His will." On the other hand, we might also conclude that such revelation of the truth would be completed during that transition period of the Church which was to be succeeded,

after the overthrow of the Jewish polity, by the matured development of the Christian polity. For the Church could not be fully equipped for its conflicts, until the whole truth necessary for convincing the world should have been revealed. And yet it is impossible, on any fair interpretation of Christ's words, not to carry the principle involved in them a step further. For although the whole body of positive truth be completely revealed, and though it be transmitted, not by uncertain tradition, but by written records, and though the language of these records be ever so perfect an expression of the truth, yet, in the nature of things, it is impossible for human language so to express spiritual truths, as not to be capable of being misunderstood. The promise therefore of the guidance of the Spirit into the whole truth necessarily involves, because that Spirit is to remain for ever, His divine aid to the Church for the purpose of guarding that truth against error and perversion. How and through what agencies such aid would be given, Jesus Christ does not as yet declare. But undoubtedly those, to whom the office of teaching the truth is committed, are entitled by this promise to expect such guidance, in all things necessary or profitable for the fulfilment of their office.

But guidance it must be observed (ὁδηγήσει), which implies a voluntary following, on man's part, of the Spirit's teaching. Even to those who were the instruments for revealing the whole of this truth, the Spirit was to be an ὁδηγός. He was not to declare such truth, as He was to show them things to come (τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν). For in this respect, the truths which the Spirit taught would differ from those which were revealed in and by Jesus Christ Himself, in being derived out of those first principles of the doctrine of

Christ (τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ χριστοῦ λόγον),* following from them as necessary consequences, though not to be deduced by reason alone, which is obscured by the errors of an unspiritual understanding, but by reason elevated into a higher sphere, purified and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and following His guidance. Neither in the first revelation of this truth, nor in the subsequent interpretation of it, are men passive mechanical instruments, but reasonable followers of the Guide who represents the Reason of God, of which human reason is a faint and feeble ray. We cannot therefore separate this promise of the Spirit's guidance from that condition of spiritual receptivity, and of love and obedience to His commandments, which Christ requires for the true knowledge of the Spirit. So that whilst those, who by their office have authority to teach the truth, have also authority to interpret the revelation of this truth, and the promise of Christ's Spirit as their guide, yet the mere fact of their holding such office can no more be accepted as in itself a proof of their having followed such guidance, than the promise of this Spirit to all the disciples of Christ, for attaining that knowledge which is life eternal, proves that all disciples would always be governed by that Spirit and attain eternal life. "If any man will do the will of God, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

We may observe how these effects of the Spirit's power gradually ascend into higher spheres of man's being, and as they ascend cease to be temporary and become permanent, the same in all ages. They begin in the physical world and the natural powers of man, bodily and mental: then they pass into that of reason, and of man's moral and spiritual life; the former dis-

* Heb. vi. 1.

appearing and becoming useless as the latter are more fully developed. Thus the promises of the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the soul, and of participation in His divine life are expressly for all who love Him, who in all ages have these highest blessings in common with the eleven who listened to the divine words of Jesus.

And the promise of power to do greater works than those which Jesus Himself wrought on earth must be also for all ages of the Church alike. These works, we have seen, to be greater than those of Christ Himself, must be supernatural effects, produced in the moral and spiritual life of man by the agency of disciples of Christ. It does not follow from the words of Christ to the eleven, that all disciples alike would be empowered to do such works: to each would be given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ; it is a promise to the *ecclesia docens*, to the Church as a society for teaching the truth, and the powers would therefore belong specially to those to whom office should be committed for the exercise of such powers. That such spiritual powers are connected with office in the Church will be more distinctly proved when we examine the teaching of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

But in order that all these promises of spiritual power may, so to speak, fall into their proper place, we must anticipate a truth which will be hereafter fully expounded. What is it that connects them all together, and makes the varied effects of the Spirit's presence only different results of one universal law? Is there not something arbitrary and artificial, it may be asked, in the distinctions which we have drawn, in apportioning certain powers to one class of men, and others, of a very different kind, to another class of men? Ought

we not, according to any fair interpretation of these words of Jesus Christ, either to regard the promises as intended only for the eleven to whom they were spoken, or else to admit that the whole of them are given, without any of these distinctions, to all Christians without exception? Have we any right to say,—unless we exclude all but the eleven, which, with the assurance that the Spirit should abide with them for ever, and with the history and teaching of the apostles before us, we cannot do,—this gift was intended for the first Christians, this also for later ages; this for the pastors of the Church, this for Christians generally? We have already found, in the acts and teaching of Christ, some clue to the solution of this question, but we must look forward a little in order to answer it completely. The fundamental truth is, that Jesus Christ Himself, in that human nature which He shares with us now, is endowed — as His title, the Christ, implies — with the Holy Ghost without measure, and therefore with all powers and spiritual gifts of which humanity is capable. And the Vine, the Church, is as we have seen not merely derived from Christ, but, in a certain sense, it is Christ; as St Paul says, when expounding this truth to the Corinthian Christians, "as the body is one, and "hath many members, so also is Christ." The humanity of which the Church is composed is the humanity of Christ. Now the effect of the redemption of Jesus Christ, as consummated in His ascension to the right hand of God, was that the Spirit, which dwells in Jesus Christ, He was empowered to give to man. It flowed from Him into the whole body of His Church, simply because the humanity in it is His. But, observe, flowed into it as into a body; not as if every human

person, of whom it is composed, were himself a Christ, as one might imagine that some supposed who attempt to expound these promises of the Spirit; but according to the order constituted in the body, and the offices and functions which each is appointed to fulfil, and, so far as concerns the beneficial possession of the spiritual gift, according to the receptivity and capacity of each. It is therefore the order of the body, which is not framed by the human will but by the authority of Christ and the will of His Spirit, that determines what spiritual gifts and powers such shall receive. The gifts do really belong to the whole body because it is one, and every member has an interest in that which every other receives. But they will differ widely in their form, —as much as the physical sense of seeing differs from the action of the lungs or heart,—because the different human persons incorporated in the Church have different functions to perform. The apostles and first disciples had their memories supernaturally quickened, and were able to work miracles, not because the Spirit given to them was different from that which we receive, but because it was their office, in the constitution of the whole Church, to bear witness to the things which they had seen and heard, and because an external testimony was necessary at first to prove to the world the truth of their mission. The pastors and rulers of Christ's Church have special spiritual gifts for their functions, not because every Christian has not the same Spirit as they receive, but because they have an office committed to them by Christ for the due discharge of which such gifts and powers are required. Thus the reality of a divinely-constituted order in the Church of Christ, not derived from the will of man, is the complete solution,

and (I may add) the only possible solution, to the question, How can the promises of the Spirit of Christ be received by us, unreservedly, as applicable to all ages to the end of the world?

It is sufficient for the present to have indicated this truth. The further development of the Church itself can alone expand it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST PRAYER OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE prayer which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St John's Gospel, was the closing act of Jesus Christ's ministry. He had completed the work which His Father gave Him to do, and now, before going forth to suffer and die for the sins of the world, He consecrates Himself, and His Church with Him, by an act of prayer, by far the most solemn recorded in the whole Word of God. It is not only *a* prayer, but *the* prayer, of the divine Redeemer of men to His Father and our Father. The simplicity and the power of this prayer of Christ are such that it is impossible to condense its words without omitting some divine truth, or to expound them without in some measure obscuring their transparent purity.

Those for whom the Lord here prays are primarily the chosen eleven then with Him. They had been given to Christ by the Father out of the world; Jesus had manifested His Father's name to them, and they had kept His word. For them He prays, that now that He is leaving the world and going to the Father, they might still be kept in the Father's name, and might be sanctified in God's Word which is truth. Them He sent into the world, even as the Father sent Him into

the world. And not for them alone does He pray but for all who believe on Him through their word.

That however which is to be chiefly noticed in the prayer is, that of all the blessings, sought for those that believe in Christ, the most conspicuous is their unity. Five times is the desire repeated that "they may be "one," or as it is finally expressed, "perfected into one." Nor can this be satisfied on the principle, that there is a real vital unity among the true disciples of Christ in things fundamental, and that Jesus Christ prays not for an outward uniformity, but for oneness of spirit. This we may well admit, and yet the conclusion from these solemn and loving words remains unaltered. For the unity which He asks for His people is such as shall convince the world of the divine mission of Christ; therefore it is not only an inward and spiritual unity, not only that of which Christians themselves are conscious, which they can discern even where there is no outward fellowship: but it must be unity visible and apparent to the world. And the fact to which this unity must testify is not, we must observe, the indwelling of one Spirit in those who believe, which would be proved by those who are disciples indeed having the same principles, feelings, and affections; but it is the first truth of the Gospel, the elementary principle lying at the foundation of the Church, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Nor indeed do the words admit the sense of a mere unity in fundamental truth or of affection, except on principles of interpretation which would explain away the main truths of revelation. The comparison of the unity, desired for all that believe, with the unity of the Father and the Son, — of which Christ elsewhere says, "I and my "Father are one,"—forbids us to understand the words

"that they may be one as we are," of any partial and imperfect unity. It must be a unity, not indeed of uniformity, but of perfect and absolute harmony. It must be a unity in action, as opposed to independent action; for "the Son doeth nothing of Himself, but "what He seeth the Father do." It must be a unity of subordination, as Jesus Christ is subject to the will of the Father. And when we consider these words, on the one hand in the light of the truths gathered from Christ's own acts and teaching as to the organisation of His Church, on the other comparing them with the history of the apostolic Church, no unprejudiced mind, I think, can doubt that the organic unity of all believers in Christ in one body, manifested in their relations with the world, is the object of the prayer. This simple and obvious meaning of the words is obscured in the minds of many by two causes. First, because they do not sufficiently appreciate the immense value, — as it is estimated by Christ Himself, — of the fundamental faith of the Church, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, which is the seed of the whole Christian life, and to which the unity of Christians testifies. And further, because they do not realise, that those who are included in this prayer, and whose unity is desired, are not some matured saints, "thoroughly furnished unto "all good works," but men who are in a state of salvation (οἱ σωζόμενοι), branches of the true Vine, whose rudimentary belief however may either bring forth fruit, or be unfruitful, according as they abide in the word of Christ or not. We must not overlay the divine simplicity of Jesus Christ's words by theories as to God's predestination, which however profitable a truth for the purpose for which it is taught, has no place here. Among the chosen Twelve, the representa-

tive men of the Church of Christ, was the son of perdition. "Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you " is a devil?"

The truth then which we gather from this divine prayer, and which is of the very deepest import in our inquiries as to the Church, is this; that there is a vital and inseparable connection between the organic unity of the Church, and its testimony before the world to the verities of the faith, comprehended, as they are, in the radical truth that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. To this the Church can only give effectual testimony by the manifestation before the world of the absolute and perfect unity of those who believe in Christ. Whatever either interrupts the fellowship of Christians in one body, or obscures the truth of their unity, is so much loss of testimony to Jesus Christ's unity with the Father, so much failure in the first object for which the Church is instituted. The remedy against divisions among Christians is an intense conviction of the necessity to man of a belief in the one truth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD.

WHEN Jesus was brought, on an accusation from the Jews, before the representative of the imperial majesty of Rome, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world for the first time confronted each other. The charge against Him,—brought by those who would gladly have welcomed Him as King had His kingdom been suited to their worldly hearts,—was that they had found Him guilty of stirring up rebellion, and forbidding men to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself was Christ a King: they added that He was a disturber of the public peace, going about the whole country teaching and exciting the minds of the people. On this charge, although Pilate was convinced that much of the accusation was false, and evidently regarded the accused as a harmless enthusiast, yet because Jesus did declare Himself to be a King, the Roman governor found himself constrained to condemn Him to be crucified, and on the cross the charge under which He was condemned to die was published in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, "Jesus of Nazareth the "King of the Jews."

And certainly there was sufficient to excite alarm

and suspicion in Roman authorities, when any one claimed to be king of the Jews. Was it not foretold by the prophets of the nation, that there should be a king of the old royal race of David, the Messiah or Christ (the very title claimed by Jesus), whose kingdom should overthrow and break to pieces all the kingdoms of the world? Had not Jesus Himself, but a few days before, entered Jerusalem amidst the acclamations of the multitudes, who hailed Him as the Son of David and their King?

Indeed must not we also ask, how could the kingdom of David be really continued and perfected in Jesus Christ, as foretold by the prophets, and declared from heaven at the time of the Annunciation, without interfering with the authority of the powers of this world? This is a question which not Roman governors only, but men of all ages need to understand, if they would not participate in the guilt of crucifying Christ, who was sentenced to death for no other cause but that He made Himself a King.

It seems hardly possible that a Roman governor would have hesitated at all in condemning Jesus, however malicious and false His accusers might have been, had not Pilate's conversation with our Lord on the subject of His kingly claims touched his conscience, and made him feel that there might be a kingdom of a different order from the kingdoms of the world, with which he as a civil ruler had no right to interfere: and what if this mysterious man before him were indeed the King, as He claimed to be? Pilate was anxious to know why it was that Jesus had been delivered to him, the foreign governor, by the Jews and their high priests, His own nation. What had He done to offend them? The answer of Jesus ex-

plains, in reply to Pilate's question, the hostility of the Jews against Him, and their unwillingness to receive Him as their King, but it reaches much beyond this. "My kingdom," He answers, "is not of this world: if "my kingdom were of this world, my servants would "have fought, that I should not be delivered to the "Jews; but now is my kingdom not from thence." And in reply to the question, "Then art Thou a "King?" the answer was, "Thou sayest truly, that I "am a King. For this cause was I born, and for this "came I into the world, that I might witness to the "truth. Every one who is of the truth heareth my "voice." "What is truth?" the Roman asks in that spirit of despairing scepticism on the one hand, and of indifference to any but earthly interests on the other, which is in all ages the distinguishing spirit of the world; and not waiting for a reply, but convinced that the empire of Cæsar had nothing to fear from such pretensions as these, he goes out to the Jews and says, "I for my part find no ground for condemnation in "him."

The words of Jesus, which produced such an effect on the mind of the Roman governor, contain the elementary principles of all relations between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of the world, and deserve our most careful study if we would ascertain those principles. First of all, we observe here generally that the language of Jesus Christ is in perfect accordance with the conclusions which we have drawn from His acts and teaching, as to there being already a kingdom of Christ actually constituted on earth. Though not of the world it is in the world; the King has not only His subjects, all who hear His voice, but also His subordinate officers (ὑπήρεται) under Himself,

whom He appoints to fulfil the special work of the kingdom, for which He Himself came into the world, —namely, to give testimony to the truth.

But what is the proof that it is not of the world, worldly in its source of power and in its character? Had it been, these servants of Christ who were in continual attendance on Him, as officers of state on an earthly monarch, would not have allowed their King to be taken from them by His enemies without a struggle. Such a surrender would have been fatal to any dominion depending on earthly resources, or originating in man. But to perceive the full force of this we must revert to the history of Jesus Christ's seizure by His enemies. When the officers of the Jewish authorities with the Roman soldiers came to take Jesus, the sword was drawn by the chief of the apostles to defend his Lord, but the wound inflicted was at once healed, and the disciple is commanded to sheathe his sword, and reminded that, if Christ needed protection, He could pray to His Father, and He would send to His aid more than twelve legions of angels. He is also told that all that take the sword must perish by the sword. And yet, be it remembered, on that very evening, Jesus had told His apostles that, now that the things concerning Him were to be accomplished, the command, which He gave them at first, to depend entirely on supernatural aid and protection, was to be changed, and every one was to take his purse and wallet with him, and even to sell his cloak, if necessary, in order to procure a sword. And when two swords were produced in the company,—for in those days it was common to carry arms, as in England till modern times,— He said, It is sufficient. That Simon Peter concluded from this conversation that arms might be used to

defend his Master, we can hardly doubt. What distinction ought to be drawn here?

That the same principle which forbade the sword to be drawn to defend Jesus Christ from the Jews, also forbids it to be drawn either to extend or to protect His kingdom, is sufficiently obvious, for this would equally mark it as of the world and not of heaven. Indeed the first reason given for sheathing the sword, is general, "They that take the sword will perish by the "sword." They trust their cause to that which recoils upon themselves. To understand however the direction to arm themselves, as other men did, we must look a little further into the matter. Undoubtedly every man has naturally the right of protecting himself and his property and those that belong to him from external violence, and to use, if necessary, the sword at all events in self-defence. This natural right of man is represented in the right of the State,—as acting for the whole community,—to use the sword both in defence of the persons and property of individuals, and also to protect its own interests, that is, those of the whole society. In proportion as civil government is efficient, and fulfils its proper functions, each individual ceases to require the sword for his own protection, and in well-governed countries his right to use it is entirely merged in that of the State: but still, wherever the State is unable to protect,—for instance against banditti, which in Judea made it usual for travellers to carry arms,—the original right still remains. We see therefore that the direction which Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, that a man should even sell his cloak in order to procure a sword, means that he should avail himself of all such means for self-protection as were legitimate, in other words he lost

none of his rights as a man and a citizen, by being a member of Christ's kingdom; and indeed he ought, even at personal inconvenience and discomfort, to assert and maintain these rights. But so far as individual rights are represented in the State and limited by its action, so far must it be with disciples as with other men. The disciple does not acquire any addition to his rights by belonging to the kingdom of Christ; when the disciples showed Him the swords they had, He said, It is sufficient. And therefore, as the members of Christ's kingdom have those rights of man which are embodied and expressed in the kingdoms of this world, with all the necessary limitations of personal rights by those of the State,—it follows also that their duties as citizens, members of the kingdoms of this world, are not altered by their belonging to Christ's kingdom. They require from society, that is the State, the same protection as other men, and therefore owe the same duties to the State as other men.

We find therefore, on examining those instructions of Christ to His disciples, that the self-same principle is involved in them as in His words to Pilate. His kingdom is not one of this world; it does not assert its rights by the sword; it is no substitute for civil government which has the sword; it is constituted and organised on earth for other purposes altogether than those which civil rulers are ordained to fulfil.

This view of the civil governor as the ordained guardian and representative of the natural rights of man, with whose functions and powers the kingdom of Christ in no way interferes, is further illustrated by a passage in our Lord's history which occurred only a few days before He was brought into the presence of the Roman governor. A part of the charge of the

Jews against Jesus was, that He forbade men to pay tribute to Cæsar, which was not only untrue but known by them to be false. In order to entrap Him in His words, and obtain some ground of accusation against Him, either to the people or to the civil governor, the two extreme Jewish parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducean Herodians, had combined in sending some men feigning conscientious scruples, which they wished Him to resolve, as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to a heathen and foreign power. "Is it lawful to pay "tribute to Cæsar or not?" The answer not only silenced these hypocritical inquirers, but affirms the principle which is the complete solution of the question. The head of the emperor with his titles on the coin proved conclusively, that, in that sphere which money represents, the sphere of all temporal rights and possessions, Cæsar was supreme. The civil ruler being the authorised guardian of earthly rights, the tribute, which is required by civil governments to enable them to fulfil their functions, is therefore due from all, nor can any standing in the kingdom of God alter this. Thus St Paul says of the civil ruler, "He is the "minister (διάκονος) of God to thee for thy good." "For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are "ministers (λειτουργοί) of God, attending continually "upon this very duty," that is of fulfilling the functions God has assigned them, for which tribute is required. This then being the proper sphere of civil government, the kingdom of Christ cannot interfere with it. Jesus had indeed disclaimed for himself,—and therefore for His kingdom,—any direct authority in this sphere. "Who made me," He replied when asked to interfere in such matters, "a judge and a divider "over you?" The absolute supremacy of the State and

its laws in this sphere is expressly affirmed by Him, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." And this sphere comprehends all the earthly life of man; so large is it that to some it seems to embrace all that man is; as it would, were man only a reasonable being with earthly relations, and not also a spiritual being with relations to a heavenly and eternal world.

It is instructive to observe how differently Jesus Christ treated a cognate question that came before Him, at an earlier period of His ministry; the question I mean, not of a tax imposed by the authority of the civil power, but of a religious payment not enforced by that authority (Matt. xvii. 24-27). The double drachma was a current equivalent for the half-shekel, which was required by the Mosaical law to be paid for the service of the sanctuary, and the payment of this capitation tax was enforced by the kings of Israel* for the use of the Temple. In the times of the New Testament it was paid by the Jews throughout the world annually for the same purpose, until Vespasian commanded that it should be paid for the Capitol at Rome. But, in our Lord's time, the obligation to pay the didrachm was of a totally different kind from the duty to pay tribute to the civil power. It was no less real, but it rested on different grounds altogether. Christ claimed immunity from it, not because He denied the obligation, but because, as Peter had lately confessed, He was the Son of God, and the heir of the throne is exempt from claims which are imposed upon others. He took the occasion to remind Peter that His Sonship was no mere figure of speech. But not to give just cause of offence to those who were ignorant of Christ's Sonship, and who therefore would suppose that He considered no such

* 2 Kings, xii. 4; 2 Chron. xxiv. 6-9.

obligation to exist, provision is made for the payment of the didrachm both for Peter and for Jesus Himself. And we must conclude from this, that, although the kingdom of Jesus Christ does not in any way interfere with the functions of earthly government in regard to earthly things, yet so far as these may be required for the purposes of His kingdom on earth, there is an obligation, not of the same nature, yet equally real, with that which requires Christians to pay tribute to the civil power. To this St Paul refers, when he says that as the priests under the law were supported by the Temple and the offerings, even so "the Lord also hath ordained that "they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."*

What then are the purposes and functions of the kingdom of Christ, which, in regard to the kingdoms of this world, is no *imperium in imperio*, because it has a totally different sphere? To this Jesus Christ, in His words to the Roman governor, has given a most complete reply. He was born and came into the world, entering into all worldly relations as King, in order that He might bear witness to the truth. The purpose of His government, therefore, in its present form, is to be a witness to the truth. Now, for the first time in the history of man, the truth comes forth into the world, not as a philosophy or mere doctrine, not only as a prophetic word, but as a kingdom incorporated in its king. This kingdom receives not its power from any earthly source, or for worldly purposes; it is not derived from the natural rights of man, or ordained to be the guardian of such rights. Its authority comes direct from heaven. It is ordained to reveal spiritual truth, which lies beyond the reach of the human understanding, and can only be known by faith. The King

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. See Part III. Chap XVI.

Himself is the Word of Life, and contains in Himself all the truth of God. He has Himself borne witness to this truth during His earthly ministry, and has already constituted and organised His kingdom, and before He leaves this earth will commission His ὑπηρεται, and direct them how to administer the kingdom, and fulfil its purposes and functions. He has promised the Spirit of God to complete His own teaching of the truth, and to reveal all that may be required, in order to assert and establish it. They need not the sword to propagate the truth, its use could only hinder the progress of the kingdom. Every one who is of the truth will hear the voice of the truth.

In this sphere the kingdoms of this world have no authority. Indeed that civil governments have no right to exercise dominion over the conscience of man, is a principle too firmly established in modern thought to require exposition here. It is a fundamental law in the doctrine of religious toleration, of liberty of thought and discussion, and of the limits of the authority of society over the individual. But the other principle, that there is a real kingdom of Christ in the higher sphere of man's moral and spiritual life, is one with which we are much less familiar. The world indeed once for all denied this truth, by crucifying the King who claimed this sphere as His own by a real divine right, and the world still continues the denial in various ways, and thus participates in the guilt of the crucifixion.

The principles which we have examined, as to the relation of the kingdom of Jesus Christ to civil governments, are so comprehensive and pregnant, that I must not conclude this chapter without applying them to the solution of a question, which we may be well assured

that He, who saw the end from the beginning, knew, when He propounded them, would hereafter arise. It is argued by some, that although the conclusions drawn from these principles in regard to civil government may be trusted when it is heathen, yet when a nation becomes Christian, the conditions of the question are wholly altered, and that which before was a kingdom of this world becomes a constituent part of the kingdom of Christ. But such an argument displays great confusion of thought, and an incapacity to grasp the fundamental distinction between Christ's kingdom and the kingdoms of the world, as marked out by His own words. The sphere of civil government is not altered because those who exercise it know the truth, and hear the voice of Christ. Such knowledge is profitable indeed, not to themselves only, but to the whole State; because the truth of Christ condemns the injustice and self-seeking which pervert power to ends injurious to the welfare of the State, and it enlightens the conscience of the State and its rulers in the fulfilment of their proper functions. But it cannot confer on the civil government, which rules by law and the sword of justice, the office of witnessing to the truth, or make it the guardian and representative of the spiritual rights of men. Nowadays, few of those, who claim such functions for the civil ruler, would carry the false claim to its logical and only legitimate conclusion; but if such were the office of the State, its right to use the sword in order to punish offences against the truth could not be denied.

But whilst the sphere of civil government is not in the least altered by its becoming Christian, it does not therefore follow that its relations to the kingdom of Christ are not considerably affected by the change. It

is no longer an enemy but a friend and ally. It no longer crucifies Christ because he is a King, or barely tolerates His kingdom, but it recognises the righteousness and peace of that kingdom as bringing innumerable blessings to man even in this life. The evil passions of men, which it is the office of the State to restrain, by law and the sword, from injuring others, it perceives to be far more effectually subdued by the instrumentalities of the kingdom of Christ. It does not therefore depart from its own proper sphere, but on the contrary fulfils its functions aright, when it renders such aid to the Church of Christ, as is consistent with the functions and action of the Church itself, in order to further the purposes for which the kingdom of heaven is instituted. And in giving such aid from earthly things for the purposes of the kingdom of heaven, it must be the judge how best such purposes may be fulfilled, because God has given to the State the supreme authority in regard to earthly things, and it cannot surrender its trust into the hands of others.

One other point may be noticed here as indicating the serious injuries to the Church of Christ, which arise from confounding the functions of civil governments with those of Christ's kingdom. All civil government must be administered by law; it is and ought to be the expression of law; notwithstanding the inherent imperfection of law, all action for the protection of the persons and property of men is only beneficial in proportion as law is its basis and rule. But the kingdom of Christ, as we have seen, is based on a higher principle than that of law; and therefore the result of confounding its administration with that which is regulated only by law, and which cannot rise above law, will be either to make the exercise of civil power arbi-

trary, or to subject the interests of the kingdom of Christ to a rule which is inapplicable. Thus we see, that the more perfect civil government is, the less capable it becomes for the administration of the kingdom of Christ. And this explains why the interference of the State in matters relating to the kingdom of God was, I will not say less injurious, but more tolerable, when civil government was directed by the personal conscience of the sovereign, than now when it is determined, as it ought to be, by law alone. For the kingdom of Christ expresses the supremacy of conscience; a kingdom of this world, in its highest form, the supremacy of law. Each is therefore disqualified for performing the duties or functions of the other.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FORTY DAYS.

THE words of Jesus Christ during the forty days that intervened between His resurrection and His ascension, were distinguished from all that preceded by some notable features. First, they are addressed only to His disciples. "He manifested Himself not to all the "people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, who "did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the "dead."* These witnesses were, primarily and most frequently but not exclusively, the apostles. Again, His teaching (if indeed we may call it teaching), when He appeared from time to time to the honoured few, is described as "giving commandments to the apostles "whom He had chosen," and more specially as "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."† That this latter expression has here some more definite meaning than that of expounding spiritual truth, we must conclude from the accounts of Christ's intercourse with His disciples during this period; and it is confirmed by observing, that it was such as to suggest the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again "the kingdom to Israel?" To which the reply given was, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which "the Father hath kept in His own power; but ye shall

* Acts, x. 41. † Acts, i. 2-3.

"receive strength" (δύναμιν not ἐξουσίαν which they had already received) "after that the Holy Ghost is "come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me." That which concerned them to know was, that they would be empowered to fulfil their present office in the kingdom, that of witnessing to Christ, and of this kingdom of testimony for the truth He spake to them. Not that it is to be supposed that Jesus Christ, during this interval, gave to His apostles positive instructions and rules as to the order of His kingdom, which they should follow in the organisation of His Church. Of this there is no trace in the history, and it would have been at variance with the spirit and tenor of His previous revelation of the kingdom: such a supposition represents the risen Saviour, who had all power in heaven and earth, the Lord of life, as a second Moses. But we may gather with certainty that the principles, out of which the new kingdom was to be evolved through the quickening power of the Spirit of truth, were now affirmed more distinctly and completely than at any former time. The work of redemption having been consummated in the death and resurrection of the Son of Man, the kingdom of His testimony begins in power.

I.—Mission and Spiritual Powers of the Church.

Passing over the appearances of Jesus to several of the disciples separately, within a few hours of His resurrection, let us examine the account of His first manifestation of Himself to the assembled disciples on the evening of that day, as recorded by St Luke and St John. The latter of these states, that the doors being closed, where "the disciples" were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them,

and saith, Peace be to you. But who were "the dis-"ciples"? Undoubtedly St John often means the Twelve, the disciples who were in continual attendance on their Lord, when he uses this phrase. But at other times he means by it the whole body of the disciples. For example he says,* that after the discourse on eating His flesh and drinking His blood many of "His dis-"ciples" turned back and left Him, and He then asked *the Twelve*, Will ye also go away? And thus in the passage we are examining St John says that Thomas one of *the Twelve* was not present. These indeed are the only passages in which the evangelist speaks of "the "Twelve," and in both evidently as distinguished from the "disciples" whom he has before mentioned. So that from St John's language alone we should infer, that the disciples assembled on this memorable occasion were not the apostles only, but the larger body, described in the first chapter of the Acts as meeting together at Jerusalem some six weeks afterwards, the number of whom altogether was about an hundred and twenty. And that this inference is correct, we gather from the Gospel of St Luke, who records, that Jesus had shown Himself that day to two disciples, on their way to Emmaus, a village some seven or eight miles from Jerusalem; and on their return to the city, they went to report the glad tidings to the rest, and found "the eleven gathered together, and "*those with them*,"—all who were united with them by a common faith in Christ. And while they were telling their brethren how the Lord was made known to them in the breaking of bread, even as they were speaking, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be to you. It is impossible therefore to avoid the conclusion that those to whom Jesus then showed

* John, vi. 66.

Himself, and to whom He spoke, were not the apostles only, but all who continued in the apostles' fellowship during these days of trial,—that is, that the whole Church of Christ on earth was then represented, and that the risen Son of Man, having accomplished the redemption of man, now manifested in the midst of His Church on earth that Presence of which He had said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, "there am I in the midst of them."

And first, as they were alarmed at this supernatural Presence, thinking it was a spirit (as when He once came to their relief on the sea of Galilee), He convinces them, by the evidence of the senses, of the reality of His risen body, and turns their fears into calm and joyful faith. Then a second time He says "Peace "be to you," adding now; "As the Father hath sent "me, even so send I you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and added "Receive the "Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are "remitted unto them; and whosesoever ye retain, "they are retained." There are two actions here, first, the mission, and then the gift of the Holy Spirit by a significant act, with the power of remitting and retaining the sins of men. But there is nothing to indicate that they were addressed to different persons; and to assume that any of these words were intended only for the apostles, is to substitute a theory of our own for the teaching of Holy Scripture.

First then as regards the mission now given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ.* It must be noticed that the word here used (πέμπω) differs from that which is invariably used of the mission of the apostles (ἀποστέλλω). The latter is better suited to express a mis-

* καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέ με ὁ πατὴρ κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.

sion with a formal defined charge, and personal responsibilities in its fulfilment; the former has a more general and indefinite sense, though of course the context may determine that the person sent had a special office committed to him. But it does not describe, and is never employed to represent, the mission of apostles. Nor can the use of the other word (ἀπέσταλκε) in the first clause, be urged against this distinction. The meaning undoubtedly is, that those addressed were as surely sent by Christ, as He was sent of the Father. The mission of the apostles more nearly resembled that of Christ Himself, in being to a definite and formal office; it was not a mission only, but a commission. But neither the apostles, nor the Church, are sent in the same sense as Jesus Christ was sent. The similarity between the mission of the Church and that of Jesus Himself is expounded in His subsequent act and words. But generally it implies, that the presence of the Church in the world, and all its functions and ministries, have as really the authority of Christ, as He Himself had the authority of the Father in His own work. The Church is ordained to represent Jesus Christ in the world, and to fulfil a work of the same nature as His own. In this work every disciple, according to his several office and appointed sphere, either of action or of suffering, has his own part; and whether he is called to prophesy or to minister, to teach or to exhort, to give, to rule, or to show mercy, he is but a member of the one body of Jesus Christ.

But a further exposition is given of this mission of the whole Church—Jesus breathes upon them and says, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Now this gift of the Holy Spirit, so significantly expressed as coming immediately

from Jesus Christ Himself, being the very breath of His own risen life, is obviously very different from the subsequent gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and was for a different purpose. That was accompanied by miraculous powers, as external signs of His presence, and was for the organic life and action of the Church, which remained without the power necessary for its own development, till those gifts were bestowed. It was essentially a gift of *power*, which was not and could not be given, until Jesus Himself had ascended to the "right hand of power." But this now bestowed is the gift of "the Spirit of *life* in Christ "Jesus," being a participation in His own life as the risen Redeemer, as He had before said, "Because I "live, ye shall live also." And the presence of this Spirit of Christ in the Church qualifies it for fulfilling the work of Jesus Christ in the remission and the retaining of sins. For this Spirit, being the representative of Christ and truly God, does Himself remit and retain sins through the Church in which He dwells. In the language of St Augustine, when arguing against errors of the Donatists: "Ut evidentius ostenderet Dominus, "ab Spiritu Sancto, quem donavit fidelibus suis, dimitti "peccata, non meritis hominum, quodam loco sic ait "resurgens a mortuis, *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum;* "et cum dixisset, *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum*, continuo "subjecit, *Si cui dimiseritis peccata, dimittentur ei;* "hoc est, Spiritus dimittit, non vos. Spiritus autem "Deus est. Deus ergo dimittit non vos. Sed ad "Spiritum quid estis vos? *Nescitis quia templum* "*Dei estis et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis?* Et iterum; "*Nescitis quia corpora vestra templum in vobis est* "*Spiritus Sancti, quem habetis a Deo?* Deus ergo "habitat in templo sancto suo, hoc est, in sanctis suis

"fidelibus, in Ecclesia sua; per eos dimittit peccata; "quia viva templa sunt."*

And if it be asked further, how this Spirit working in the Church remits and retains sins, I may reply in other words of the same most profound theologian; which I will leave for the consideration of those, who can see in this passage nothing more, than either some special powers given to the eleven personally,—the purpose of which it is not very easy to discover, and in which it must be supposed that Thomas, being absent, did not partake,—or else some sacerdotal functions committed only to apostles and their successors. Augustine, in his exposition of this part of St John's Gospel, gives a very different view of this work of the Spirit. He says, "Ecclesiæ charitas quæ per Spiritum Sanctum "diffunditur in cordibus nostris, participum suorum "peccata dimittit: eorum autem, qui non sunt ejus "participes, tenet. Ideo posteaquam dixit, *Accipite* "*Spiritum Sanctum*, hoc continuo de peccatorum remis- "sione ac detentione subjecit."

But into this profoundly interesting and momentous question, how the Spirit of love and truth, working by the disciples of Christ, and by Christ's love and truth, rendered complete the mission of the Son of Man Himself in remitting and retaining the sins of fallen humanity, it would exceed the limits of our argument to enter, except so far as it bears on the subject of the organic action of the Church. Of that Jesus Christ does not here speak. But we must remember, that we have abundant evidence from His other acts and teaching, that the body is one, but that in the one body all the members have not the same office. The life of the Spirit, which is the life of Christ, animates the whole, but it

* August. Serm. ad Populum, xcix. 9.

manifests itself in different forms. For example, to refer to the teaching of apostles of Christ as to the general action of this Spirit, St Paul says, "Brethren, "if any man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are* "*spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meek- "ness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law "of Christ." And St James, "Confess your faults "one to another, and pray one for another that ye may "be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a right- "eous man availeth much. . . . Brethren, if any one "among you do err from the truth and one convert "him; let him know, that he which converteth a "sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul "from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And St Peter, "Above all things have fervent love one to "another, for love shall hide a multitude of sins"— which in both these passages has undoubtedly the same meaning, that is, shall draw the veil of God's for- giveness over sins. And St John himself, "If any one "see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, "and shall give him life," (I mean) "to those that sin "not unto death. There is sin unto death; for that I "say not he should ask. All unrighteousness is sin, "and there is sin not unto death."

Yet this hinders not, but even implies as a necessary consequence, that, in the order of the Church of Christ, which is organised for the express purpose of fulfilling its own high mission, there shall be offices to which it shall belong, as their special function, to give expres- sion, voice, and outward form to this action of the Spirit of truth and love. And we have seen, that to Peter, the representative of the apostolic office, authority was given by Jesus Christ to loose and to bind on earth,

which undoubtedly includes, although it is not entirely conterminous with, the authority to remit and to retain sin. But these mighty powers are, as we have already seen, not some prerogative, either personal or official. In this respect they differ from the pastoral functions of the apostolic office. They are the result of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the Church, according to the measure of every part, and according as the several members of the body are organs of His will, and under His direction. And therefore, when the action of the body is healthy, while to one it pertains to declare officially and with authority to men the forgiveness of sins or their retention, yet he is not isolated from other members but acts with their co-operation and concurrence. A remarkable and most instructive example of this is given in the conduct of the apostle Paul towards the incestuous man at Corinth. We shall hereafter examine this case with reference to the general subject of discipline. I now call attention to it as illustrating how the Spirit of life in Christ is the true power working in the Church, of which the apostolic office is the instrument. The judgment which the apostle himself pronounced on that man in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he called on the Corinthians to confirm when they were gathered together (he himself being in spirit present with them) with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when the man showed signs of repentance, and needed to be assured of the free forgiveness of God, rather than of His sentence on the impenitent,—then, in a second epistle, the apostle says, "To whom ye for-"give anything, I also: for I for my part, that which "I have forgiven" (whatsoever I have forgiven) "for "your sakes have I done so in the person of Christ." He assures them, that he used his apostolic authority, as

representing Christ, to declare this man forgiven, for their benefit, in order that the Spirit of love which is of Christ might abound among them. Here the apostle is the authoritative leader and organ of that Christian spirit, which has the power both of condemning sin and granting absolution from it. Yet his own action is not complete, and cannot have its full efficacy, except through the same spirit being awakened in the Corinthians themselves, and concurring with his own.

We shall see more fully, in the further investigation of this subject in the apostolic history, how these powers, given generally to the whole Church and intrusted for their execution to the apostolic office, enable the Church to form such judgments as are necessary for its wellbeing as an organised society on earth; not to weed out the tares, which in outward form may much resemble the wheat, or to anticipate the final judgment of Christ; but so that there may not be a root of bitterness, by which many shall be defiled. And for this the Church has the authority of Christ, as certainly as He Himself received authority from the Father to judge men, as being the Son of Man.

II.—The Church of the Future.

The second appearance of Christ, which is recorded only by St John, took place on the eighth day after the first, that is, on the second Lord's Day of this new period of the Church's history. The disciples of Christ were again "within," which evidently means that they were assembled as before when Jesus came to them. Thomas, who then was present, was convinced by the evidence of his senses of the reality of Christ's risen body; and he confessed Jesus as his Lord and his God.

For assuredly, if the other miracles of Christ proved Him to Simon Peter to be the Son of the living God, much more did this crowning victory over death determine Him (as the apostle Paul says*) to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness. The words of Jesus in reply to Thomas, while they reprove the slowness of His disciple's faith, recognise it as a true faith, a good confession of Him on whom the Church is founded; but, as is usual with all the more solemn words of Christ, they look out beyond the present circumstances, the doubts and restored belief of Thomas, into a far wider field. "Because thou hast "seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they, who "have not seen, and yet have believed." Who are these on whose faith Christ pronounces a special blessing? Not certainly the apostolic body, whose blessing it was to be appointed to testify of that which their eyes had seen, and their ears heard, and their hands had handled of the Word of life? Nay more, (may we not say?) in a certain sense, none of those who lived in apostolic times. For our Lord here evidently expresses a universal principle, applicable without respect of time, namely, that the faith which requires external evidences, appealing to the senses by signs and wonders and mighty works, is inferior to that faith which springs wholly out of the word and truth of Christ, and does not need this confirmation. The blessing, therefore, which the evangelist records, as the characteristic result of the second manifestation of the risen Saviour to His assembled Church, has no limited and merely temporary meaning, which would render it unworthy of this solemn occasion. It looks forward into the future, and could only have its full application when the transi-

* Rom. i. 4.

tional period of His Church should have ended, and the visibly supernatural powers should have passed away, and the basis for the faith of men should be only the word of Christ and the testimony of His Spirit. And certainly, if those who have not seen and yet believe are more blessed than those who believe because they have seen, it is a grievous error to regard the Church of apostolic times as more highly favoured than that of subsequent ages, as possessing more of the true power of the kingdom of heaven, and more highly qualified for fulfilling the mission of the Church on earth as the representative of the Son of Man. And this conclusion is rendered yet more definite and pointed by the fact, that Thomas, to whom these words were addressed, was himself absent on that previous occasion when the infant Church of Christ received from the risen Lord its mission of mercy and truth, which His Spirit of life was to accomplish through those who are partakers of Christ's life. His faith, indeed, though it needed the confirmation of sensible evidence, made him also, no less than those who were present at the first appearance of Christ, a partaker in this great blessing of this divine mission. Yet if Thomas was a partaker, much more those, who, though absent, yet believe without seeing.

III.—Pastoral Functions of the Apostolic Office.

The Gospel of St John records a third appearance of Jesus Christ to some of the disciples, to which the other evangelists do not allude, and which has characteristic lessons of its own, by which "the things per-" taining to the kingdom of God," taught on other occasions, are largely supplemented. Seven disciples,

including Simon Peter, who, as usual, is named first, were together in Galilee, and as this is called by the evangelist the third manifestation to "*the disciples*," these seven were, in some sense, representatives of the rest, and were probably all of them of the number of the Twelve. Simon Peter proposed to the rest to go a-fishing. But, as on the memorable occasion at the commencement of their Lord's ministry, when He had first declared that He would make them "fishers of "men," they toiled all the night and caught nothing. Some of them must have been reminded, as they drew up their empty net through the weary watches, of the former night of toil, and of the manifestation of their Lord's power, and their calling to a high office in His kingdom that followed. As the morning dawned, some one on the shore, whom they did not recognise, hailed them, and asked if they had taken any fish. He then told them to cast their net on the right side of their boat, and that they would succeed. They cast it as he directed, still having only a dim consciousness who it was that spoke, and now they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of the fishes. At once the disciple whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord; and Peter, as prompt to act, as John was quick to discern, casts himself into the sea with his fisher's coat girt about him, whilst the other disciples followed in the boat, which was only a hundred yards from the shore, dragging the net full of fish, and when, with the aid of Simon Peter, they had landed the net, they found in it a hundred and fifty-three large fishes, and "for all there were so many, yet was not the net "broken."

The significance of a miraculous draught of fishes having occurred, first at the commencement, and then

at the close, of the period during which the apostolic ministry was established,—especially with our Lord's own interpretation of the labours of the fisherman as representing the work of apostles and the kingdom of heaven,—leaves no doubt as to the symbolic nature of this act of Jesus Christ. It seems probable, that whilst the first,—in which the net was broken, the number indefinite, and the ships overloaded with the fish taken,—represents the gathering of men, good and bad, into the Christian Church,—the second,—in which the net remained unbroken, the number was definite, and all were brought safe to land,—is a figure of the assured success of the apostolic ministry in completing the number of God's elect, and bringing all, not one being lost, into the eternal kingdom.

But without resting any argument on the symbolic meaning of the circumstances, and regarding them simply as directing the thoughts of the disciples to the truths which Jesus was about to expound, let us pass to His words that followed the miracle, with which they are closely connected. After the morning meal was finished,—fit emblem of that blessed feast on the morning of the coming of the Lord, when He shall call His faithful servants to sit down, after their labours, at meat with Himself,—Jesus, referring without doubt to Peter's former professions of devotedness beyond all other men, three times, and addressing him by his original paternal name, "Simon, son of Jonas," asks him whether he loved Him; and three times, on Peter's appealing to the Lord's own knowledge that his love was sincere, in somewhat varied terms He charges him to feed His sheep. That this was a restoration of Peter to an office which he had forfeited by his threefold denial of Jesus Christ, cannot be said; he never

ceased to be, what he was from the beginning, the first of the Twelve. But neither Peter, nor the other apostles, had as yet received that commission which was the final act of Jesus Christ before He went to the Father; and now, as the assurance that Christ's purposes were in no wise altered by the infirmities of His servant, and to remind both Peter and others that love to a forgiving Redeemer is the only sufficient motive power of apostolic duties, the true work of the apostolic ministry is set forth in a new and yet more definite form, and,—more distinctly than ever it had been exhibited in the earlier teaching of Jesus Christ,—as the very counterpart and completion of the work of Him who is the minister of God to man. Hitherto, Jesus Christ has represented His apostles as fishers of men, servants in the household, labourers in the vineyard, witnesses to Himself. But one relation to sinful men He has as yet retained for Himself. I, He says, am the good shepherd, my sheep hear my voice, I know my sheep and am known of mine. Yet in using this language of Himself, He sets Himself forth, as we have seen, as the example for those who should hereafter under His authority have the charge of His sheep. And now the time is come, when the great Shepherd being about to go to the Father, the charge of His flock should be committed into the hands of those whom He had appointed.

The terms of the command thrice given to Peter are, I have observed, somewhat varied. First it is, Feed my lambs: give spiritual food to those who are children in Christ, who "have need of milk and not of strong "meat." Again it is, Be a shepherd to my sheep; tend them, go before them, lead them, defend them. The third time it is, Feed my sheep; minister spiritual

sustenance to all, whether fathers or young men, or children in Christ; speak wisdom among them that are perfect, or are going on unto perfection; leave not this work for other functions of the office, nor let it suffice thee to intrust this to others, whilst thou art occupied with other, and, as it may seem, more exalted duties. And above all things remember, the sheep are mine not thine own.

We observe therefore that in the pastoral office there is first of all the duty, common alike to all who hold it, of supplying spiritual sustenance for the souls of those committed to their charge, "to give to every one," great and small, "his food in due season." No functions of government, no labours in defending the fold from assaults, can exempt any pastor of souls from this primary duty of the office. The chief of the apostles is himself, if he loves Christ, to show his love by feeding both lambs and sheep. Well did Peter fulfil his trust, both by word and by writing putting the people of Christ "in remembrance" of the truth of Christ, and by the testimony which he left "endeavouring that "even after his decease they might have these things in "remembrance." * For it cannot be in this warfare, as in an army, in which some fight the battle and others merely direct: the work of the soldier must be done by every one of Christ's servants. Yet this duty of feeding is by no means all that pertains to the pastoral office; the word ποίμαινε includes, besides feeding, all duties necessary for the direction, welfare, and safety of the flock, all for which gifts and powers are required of a different order from those which the sheep themselves possess. And the command to exercise these powers for the benefit of the flock, implies both

* See Part III. Chap. XV.

a capacity for these powers in him to whom the trust is committed, and at the same time the promise that the powers shall accompany the faithful discharge of the office. For who would commit a precious trust to one whom he judged not to be both capable and faithful, or without supplying him with all things needful for the fulfilment of his duties?

That the pastoral office here committed to Peter is the same in its substance, as that which every pastor of Christ's Church receives, is evident from the fact, that the word (ποιμαίνειν), which includes the whole functions of the pastor, is used of all who in any degree partake of the office.* But the question whether there are different degrees or orders in the office cannot be thus decided, although a popular commentator of the present day thinks the notion of a primatical power being given to Peter in these words too "silly" to require any wiser answer. But it may surely be asked, whether all shepherds who tend a flock have the same duties and authority in regard to it. It may also fairly be argued, that Peter himself commands presbyters to tend the flock of God *that is amongst them*,† which is a limited charge, but these words commit to Peter all the sheep of Christ, that is, a general and universal charge. Undoubtedly they do this, for as yet there is no limitation or definition of special spheres of labour in the Church. Of the new spiritual Israel the apostles are generally the governors, ποιμένες λαοῦ, holding with regard to all the people of Christ an office under Him of a similar nature, however different in degree, to that which He Himself exercises as the chief Shepherd. The organisation of the Church is in its

* Acts, xx. 28; 1 Pet. vi. 2.

† Ποιμάνατε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

simplest form, the separation of the Twelve from the rest of the disciples being its principal feature. It would be at variance with all the laws that govern the development of existence throughout God's universe, if at this early stage there should be found the same defined and limited functions of office which will obtain in the perfected constitution of Christ's Church. But we have found marked out by Jesus Christ Himself, obviously with a view to the future constitution of His Church, elements of order and authority, of mutual interdependence and yet due subordination; and in this elementary organisation the selection of one as the first of the apostolic body stands out as a fact which no unprejudiced reader of Scripture can question. But the subsequent history of the Church in the apostolic times, when it was growing into its matured form, can alone determine for us what is, and what is not, the true and legitimate development of this principle.

Thus much however is already apparent in regard to the polity of the Church of Christ. That it is no dead level of equality, of identity of functions and offices,—this Church is not to be a homogeneous mass without distinction of parts,—rudis indigestaque moles, non bene junctarum discordia semina rerum,—but a body having its due form and proportions. And if, as we have seen reason to suppose, there is so intimate a connection between its several parts, that the administrative functions of any one member belong to that member merely as the organ of the whole body,—he who holds office being the officer of the state,—which is the fundamental idea of a republic; it is no less evident, that the divinely-ordained system of the Church comprehends also that which is the characteristic idea and the peculiar power of a monarchy, that of responsi-

bilities and authority centering in a person, for the which he is responsible to Christ only. And we must remember, as has been already observed,* that it would have been impossible to exhibit this principle distinctly, unless Jesus Christ had singled out one, the first, and thus the representative, of the apostles, to whom a personal charge should be given. It has been often said that in Peter is set forth the truth of the unity of the Church. But we may discern yet more clearly another principle, in this personal selection by Jesus Christ of one person, in whom the responsibilities, powers, and functions of the apostolic office are set forth; I mean, that the true pastoral charge of the Church is not through some well-balanced system, by some constitution in which there are laws and rules, provisions and safeguards, checks and counter-checks to produce an equipoise of contending powers, as in a well-ordered kingdom of this world; but through a personal administration under Christ in which the conscience of the minister is supreme. Every system which is not developed out of this principle of the personal exercise of the full powers of the pastoral office,—which does not exhibit this element of personal government,—must be an irregular and abnormal growth. The opposite truth to this must be found in other teaching of Jesus Christ, as where He says to His disciples, "One is your Guide and Teacher, even "Christ; and all ye are brethren; and call no man "father upon earth, for one is your Father, He who is "in heaven." What shall be the resultant, in the organisation of the Church, of these two antithetical principles, of personal administration, and brotherly equality,—what extent of pastoral functions shall be

* See *supra*, Chap. IV., p. 102.

consistent with them, and what inconsistent,—we can only learn from the subsequent history of the Church's development.

The character of the true pastoral office, as a personal following of Jesus Christ, was further illustrated by Him on this occasion in two remarkable prophecies respecting the two chief apostles there present,—prophecies which carry us beyond the range of the New Testament, and link on the teaching of Jesus Christ with the history of the primitive Church in uninspired records. First, it was foretold to Simon Peter what manner of death he should die: having followed his Lord in the ministry of the Gospel, he should in his old age follow Him also in His death, and glorify God, by his stretching forth his hands, and by another girding him and carrying him whither he would not. Which history informs us was fulfilled in the martyrdom of St Peter by crucifixion.

But the prophetic hint given by Jesus Christ of the subsequent history of another apostle, the beloved disciple John, although it is wrapt in mysterious language which caused it to be misinterpreted by the disciples then, and to be misunderstood by Christians of later ages, is of yet deeper significance. Peter, seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved following Him, as the spontaneous expression of his readiness to walk in all his Master's steps, asks what John's future course shall be. He too was to follow his Master in the same ministry, would he also follow Him in death? The answer was, "If I "will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Undoubtedly the disciples were not mistaken in concluding from this, that John would tarry till his Lord should come. They were too conversant with their Master's teaching to suppose, that His solemn words

were merely a rebuke to idle curiosity. They only misunderstood what was meant by that coming of Christ which was so near at hand that it should happen in the lifetime of one of themselves. But while Peter was warned that he himself should, like his Master, be cut off by a violent death in the midst of his labours before the kingdom of God should come in its power, he was also reminded that he must not question the wisdom of his Lord's appointment, if another lot was ordained for his fellow-servant, the beloved John. What was it to Peter, if John was to follow Christ and glorify God, not by dying early, but by living on to a prolonged old age to witness the completion of the building which the other apostles began? What if he should tarry until that kingdom of heaven, which they preached, should enter upon a new stage of its existence by the coming of one of the days of the Son of Man; until the Gospel should have been fully testified throughout the cities of Israel, and that day of the Lord should come, which Jesus Himself had foretold, when Jerusalem should be compassed with the armies of the Gentiles, and the old Temple and polity should be finally overthrown, and out of the ruins the new spiritual temple of Christ should arise in all its fair proportions, with its perfected order, and in its matured form, with its holy ministries of mercy, and its marvellous adaptations to the life, personal and social, of reasonable man, and be now the visible sign of God's presence on earth, as the material Temple at Jerusalem had been under the imperfect and transitory economy of the law? It was no mean or unworthy lot, that was assigned to the beloved John, to labour on through trial and suffering "for the word of God "and the testimony of Jesus Christ" in order that he

might set the seal of Christ, by the apostolic authority received from his Lord, on that perfectly-developed form of His Church, in which the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ were to have their full expression.

This is the only rational explanation that can be given of the last words of Jesus respecting the beloved disciple, and its connection with the functions of the pastoral office is sufficiently apparent. The later writings of St John himself afford, as we shall find, no obscure or uncertain evidence that he did thus tarry till the Lord came in His power, that he bore witness for Christ, even unto that state and condition of Christ's Church which has continued, amidst all the changes of the world, to the present hour. The life of him whom Jesus loved was prolonged, by the appointment of the Son of Man, to form a connecting link, of the utmost value to all ages of the Church and not least to our own, between the first revelation by Jesus Christ of the elementary principles of the kingdom of heaven, and their complete development in the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

IV.—The Apostolic Commission.

We come now to that which was the final and by far the most definite instruction of Christ respecting the offices and powers of His Church, as *ecclesia docens*, a society instituted by Himself to fulfil the work of mercy which He began, and to convey to men that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. This final charge is recorded most fully and exactly by St Matthew; the apostolic fragment at the close of St Mark's Gospel records a similar command

of Christ, delivered either on the same or on another occasion; while St Luke, in a general summary of the instructions of Jesus Christ to the disciples after His resurrection, gives the same in substance.

Before however we examine these momentous words of Jesus Christ, as recorded by St Matthew, I would call attention to certain principles, affecting the histories of Christ's life, which are necessary to a right understanding of the several records, and especially applicable to the different accounts which we possess of the period between the resurrection and ascension. It was a special promise of Christ to His disciples, that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, should not only teach them all things, but, particularly, should remind them of all things which He had Himself said to them. The authentic records therefore of the teaching of Jesus Christ must be considered, by every one who believes in Him, as being in the highest sense inspired history. But what does this imply? Does it mean that they differ from other history, or are any way superior to it, in such matters as the chronological order of events, and the exact accuracy of the circumstantial accidents,—that they are, so to speak, a perfect photographic reproduction of the details? Very little consideration must convince us that this would be no real fulfilment of the promise, no work worthy of the divine Spirit of truth, the Comforter of the Church, the Revealer of Jesus Christ to men. St John has said, at the close of his Gospel, that if all things which Jesus did were to be related in detail (*καθ' ἕν*), he thought the whole world would not hold the books that should be written. It was, in the nature of things, impossible that all should be recorded. Was it then the work of the Spirit merely to select some facts here, some words

there, and set forth four patchwork histories, strictly accurate so far as they might extend, which, by piecing them together with ingenious and far-fetched conjectures, our clever harmonists might convert into something like an exact, yet after all a very incomplete, representation of the life and teaching of Christ? I think, if this had been the purpose, we should have been spared the uncertain and unprofitable labour. But was it not rather, since the whole cannot be reproduced in its details,—far easier would it be to relate every single incident of the greatest battle ever fought on earth, or by such an enumeration of circumstances, if possible, to represent the mind and judgment of the commander,—to enable each several writer to seize on those things which shall most fully exhibit the living truth of the divine history, and so to produce it that it shall be to us the most real and distinct picture of that which it concerns us to learn and know? If the words of Jesus Christ Himself as to the being and the power of that Holy Spirit who speaks to us through the apostles and evangelists are to be believed, His own acts and teaching are themselves not more really divine than is *the form in which they are represented to us*, the mould in which they are cast, by the Spirit of truth. It has been said that sometimes poetry is more true than a literally exact but unphilosophical history, because the one may exhibit the form and pressure of the times more truly than the most accurate details. The difference here, however, is not as between fiction and history; but, we may say, as between the painting of some glorious scene, in which the exalted genius of the artist makes the details subordinate to the unity and perfection of the whole, and a servile copy, precisely correct, of particular parts, in which the living

idea is lost to the mind even in the multiplication and minuteness of the circumstances.

I may now state, without fear of being misunderstood, what I cannot doubt is the true explanation of the differences, which sorely perplex our harmonists, in the several accounts left to us of Christ's intercourse with His disciples after the resurrection. I mean, that each of them is absolutely complete in itself; that is, not as to the chronological connection of the incidents, but as representing that which the Spirit of truth purposes to teach. Far from the chronological order being essential to the truth, it must be often necessary for one who is giving a condensed summary of the living spirit and truth of the history to neglect that order.

Bearing this in mind, we cannot escape the conclusion, both from the Gospel of St Matthew and from the record in St Mark's Gospel, that the commission given by Jesus Christ to teach all nations and evangelise the world was addressed to the apostles, not to the whole body of the disciples. Addressed to them, again I would say, not as isolated and separated from the rest of the Church, but as those to whom a special office and ministry was intrusted, and from whose office all the ministries of the Church, for the fulfilment of these purposes of its divine Founder, should be hereafter evolved. To argue, as some have argued, that this commission was demonstrably understood to have been given, not to apostles only, but to all that believe on Christ, because we find in the Acts that others besides apostles preached the Gospel,—is to misapprehend the question at issue. The question is first, Were the apostles appointed by Jesus Christ to an office, the purposes, functions, and powers of which were expounded to them in this solemn commission? and then, Was the

office, to which these duties and defined responsibilities were committed, to cease with the death of the eleven, or was it to continue, as a permanent institution, to the end of the world? The answer, which every unprejudiced mind must give, cannot be affected by our finding, or supposing that we find, that others, not partaking of this office, fulfilled some of these duties. If a king commission an army to subdue a rebellious province, it does not alter the fact, or the necessity for this commission, if others have aided those who were specially sent by the sovereign. We must look a little deeper into the meaning and reasons of things, if ever we are to attain to unity of judgment on these questions. And, above all, if we cannot ourselves discern such reasons, let us not substitute our own theories and notions for the conclusions to which Holy Scripture itself directs us.

But these words of Jesus Christ, which are the very charter and constitution of the Church as the Teacher of the world, demand from us the very closest attention and the most exact interpretation. St Matthew, who was himself present, records that this final commission was given to the eleven in Galilee, on "a mountain "where Jesus had appointed them;" possibly, (may we not say probably?) the same mountain where in the presence of a chosen assembly He had first ordained them to be His witnesses to the world. He now enlarges their commission, and particularly expounds it, and He surrounds it with the assertion of His own universal authority and promises of His continual presence. His own words indicate, why before He gave them only a limited charge, with some obscure hints of a far wider mission; why now, after His resurrection, this original commission is changed into one, which, both as

regards its sphere and the period of its operation, is unlimited.

First then, He declares to them, that now having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, all authority (*ἐξουσία*) is given to Him, the Son of Man, both in heaven and in earth. On this universal right of Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of men, is founded the authority delegated to the apostolic body.

The work to which they are commissioned is the very continuation of that in which Jesus Himself was engaged during His three years' ministry on earth, but the field is no longer Judea and Galilee only, but all nations under heaven, and the service is not to be interrupted after a few brief years, but is to be extended to the end of the world. It is necessary to bear this in mind, in order to determine the full meaning of the commission here given.

The exact words of Jesus Christ are of so much consequence, that I give them first in the original Greek, and then in a literal rendering:

Πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,—βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος,—διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ, ἰδοὺ, ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

"Go and disciple all the nations,—baptising them "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of "the Holy Ghost,—teaching them to observe all things "as many as I have commanded to you: And, lo! I "am with you all the days unto the end of the world."

The word which in our English version is rendered "teach," and in the marginal reading, "make disciples "or Christians" (*μαθητεύσατε*) includes the whole process of "disciple-ing" or discipline, from the first initia-

tory teaching to the more complete instruction.* And this twofold work, which we trace in our Lord's own ministry, is distinctly marked out in the apostolic commission; first there is to be the admission to discipleship, by the baptism of those who, having heard the Gospel of Christ, profess faith in its fundamental truths, —by which initiatory ordinance they are brought into a state of salvation; and secondly, there is the building up of those that believe in knowledge and practice, the complete discipline of the Christian life.

It is evident therefore that this commission comprehends much more than that, to which it is often understood exclusively to apply,—the evangelising of heathen or other unbelieving nations,—although this is of course included. But the work of Christ's Church would little resemble His own, if this were the whole, or even the principal part, of the labours of an apostle, or if the preliminary teaching, necessary to awaken the first beginnings of faith, were held to be a more important or profitable mission than the subsequent instruction of those who being disciples are to be led on unto perfectness of faith and knowledge. And it must be observed that Christ said not, Make disciples *out of* all nations, but, Disciple all nations; gather them into the fold by baptism, and then instruct them in the knowledge of Christ. So that the exercise of the pastoral office among those whose national faith is Christianity, is just as expressly intended in the charge of Jesus Christ, as the gathering of converts out of heathen nations.

In the first parts of the process included in the word "disciple," the definite form of baptism, now given for the first time, also for the first time indicates the defin-

* See Matt. xiii. 52; Acts, xiv. 21; and compare John, iv. 1.

ite and explicit form of that faith on which the Church of Christ is founded, to which it is ordained to testify, and the confession of which is necessary for admission into this divine society. The confession by Peter, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, is the elementary form of the same faith which is now embodied in the more developed formula of "the Name of "the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism into that triune Name has indeed other deeper spiritual meanings, which it would be beyond the purpose of this work to discuss; but as regards the office of the *ecclesia docens* it obviously implies its testimony to the faith which that Name represents; that is, to the faith, which in the Creed "commonly called "the Apostles' Creed" is expressed in fuller terms than in the form of baptism, but in simple language taken almost without change from apostolic teaching; and which in the Nicene Creed is set forth more explicitly and exactly, yet also "not in words which "man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost "teacheth."* This part of the Church's office then includes and implies its whole testimony to the fundamental objective truths of the faith in its ordinances and ministrations.

The other part has a yet wider range. "Teaching "them," that is, the baptised disciples, "to observe all "things as many as I have commanded to you." These words embrace the whole discipline of the Christian life, as well as all progress in the knowledge of spiritual truth. Jesus Christ had Himself summed up in a few words that which was the inner spirit of all His com-

* I do not in this include the *filioque*, which forms no part of the Creed as held by the universal Church. See Part III. Chap. XIII., *Note* on the Creeds.

mandments, the one master principle which in His kingdom was to supersede the carnal commandments of the old dispensation. "This is my commandment "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." This is the "law of Christ," which must govern all the mutual relations of His disciples; this is the test by which all must be distinguished; this is the "spirit that "giveth life," which in the spiritual kingdom takes the place of the "letter that killeth." And yet, for this very reason, because love is the law of the kingdom, are there new vessels to contain this new wine, forms to embody and represent the Spirit, which undoubtedly are included in this charge to teach all the commandments which Christ Himself delivered to His apostles. For example, and especially, He had given one commandment, the express purpose of which was to embody and set forth those divine mysteries of redemption which began to be spoken by the Lord Himself, and were to be expounded more fully by the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. The disciples were to be taught in this Paschal feast of the new covenant, to show forth His death until His coming again. As the ordinance of baptism was that round which the first principles of Christian doctrine and discipline were to be gathered, so would this other sacrament of the Gospel be the central point, not only of the practical life of the Christian, but also of all those mysteries of godliness, "the "wisdom for them that are perfect," which are necessary for the growth and the maturity of the Christian life.

But we must observe further that in the comparison, —which is suggested in the very word "disciple,"—between the ministry of Jesus Christ Himself and that of the apostles whom He now sends forth into the world

as He Himself was sent into the world, there is indicated a yet wider scope of their commission. For we must remember that the purpose of Jesus Christ's ministry was to make out of His disciples pastors and teachers; and not mere teachers only, but apostles; He formed, as we have found, not a mere collection of disciples, but an organised society, a body having, not only life from Christ, but also powers of reproduction and propagation, a plant, like those of the first creation, having seed in itself upon the earth.

And this is also involved in the terms of the commission given to the eleven. For if they were to teach others to observe all things which Christ had commanded to them, this must include the charge given to them to teach and minister to others. As Jesus Christ had chosen them out of His disciples, and committed to them the ministry of His Gospel with special powers and functions, so, in order to fulfil their commission, must they in their turn select others, and commit to them the same office and ministry. As He had said to the chosen eleven, "Feed my sheep," "Go into all the "world and preach the Gospel to every creature," so must they perpetuate the same charge by a continual succession.

Before we leave these words of Jesus Christ, which refer to the second part of the apostolic commission, we must notice that they afford further proof,—if indeed any more is needed,—that the charge is intended for those who hold an office and ministry in the Church, and not primarily or directly for the whole body of disciples. Because those, who are to be taught the perfect knowledge of Christ's commandments, are such as already are disciples and received into the Church by baptism. There are therefore in the Church, as in-

dicated by Christ's own words, those who are commissioned by Him to instruct other disciples in the law of Christ, and those who receive instruction. To disannul this distinction, and to make it the office and duty of all disciples to teach all, is not only directly at variance with the acts and teaching of Christ Himself, but it is to make Him the author of confusion, not the God of order.

Nor can it be said that the words "as many things "as I have commanded to you" limit the distinction between the teachers and the taught in the Church to the period when the eleven themselves exercised their ministry. Because those who are addressed are supposed by Jesus Christ Himself to have a perpetual existence; "Lo! I am *with you* all the days to the end "of the world." Before "the end of the world," in which, as foretold by Jesus Himself in the parable of the tares of the field, the good and the evil should be finally separated, there were to be many days,—more than the apostles themselves conceived possible, more perhaps than Christians now imagine,—days of the Son of Man, days of trial, days of judgment, days of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. But throughout all these the same apostolic body exists; "with you;" —the same, not in the persons of whom it is composed, but, because as a body it would never be extinct, the same in the powers, functions, and responsibilities belonging to it; the very same,—if we are to believe the words of Jesus Christ Himself,—as He then addressed. And the promise of His perpetual presence is not to be expounded as a general assurance that He would never desert His Church, which, true and certain as it is, and to be inferred from this particular promise as well as from many others, yet touches not the great

question here. This promise is far more definite. "I "am with *you*," whom I send forth to the apostolic work and office: to be fishers of men, pastors of my flock, stewards of my household; with you, in all ages, in the fulfilment of those duties and ministries which I intrust to you. The presence of Jesus Christ is here assured, not as elsewhere for the consolation and encouragement of all who are disciples, but to supply strength, comfort, wisdom, authority, to those whose office it is to make and instruct disciples.

It is impossible therefore, if we deduce our conclusions as to the constitution of Christ's Church from Holy Scripture itself, and do not substitute for these some theory which we may consider either more rational or more spiritual, not to arrive at the following conclusions; that, in this last charge of Jesus Christ, He commissions, by His own sovereign and universal authority, to an office, the functions, responsibilities, and powers of which He here defines and describes; that this office is a permanent and perpetual institution, and of perpetual authority, being the very same, in its substance, as the eleven themselves held; and further, that the law of perpetual succession to the office should be,—not that of natural descent, as the ministry in God's house of old was perpetuated,—but through the action of those who themselves hold the office, according to the example which Christ Himself gave to His apostles in His own ministry.

But whilst these truths are so clearly set forth by the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, that it is difficult to conceive how any unprejudiced mind can fail to recognise them, we must notice on the other hand, that neither here nor elsewhere, in any teaching of Christ as to the apostolic office, is there that which in the

strict and proper sense of the word is *law.* When Aaron and his descendants were appointed to an everlasting priesthood, it was forbidden that any one who was not of the seed of Aaron should exercise the functions of the priestly office. *Prohibition is essential to that which is truly law.* But law, in that sense, has no place in the spiritual constitution of Christ's Church. Jesus Christ Himself said, we have seen, of one who, being outside the apostolic order and ministry, yet exercised some of their powers, "Forbid him not, for he that is "not against us is on our part."

Shall it be asked, What then is the meaning of office if it be not fenced in by prohibition? We may as well ask, what is the meaning of the hand in the natural body of man, when the foot is not prevented from performing the office of a hand? We see, in that case, that the question is one of organic adaptation. We know that when a man has lost his hands, or is born maimed, other members will, to a marvellous degree, supply the place of the hands; when hearing is gone, the eye becomes preternaturally quick to distinguish the motions of the speaker's lips; when sight has failed, the hearing is quickened; when both hearing and eyesight are wanting, the remaining senses are so awakened and enlarged that even one born blind and deaf, and therefore dumb, is still capable of communication with his fellows. But do we therefore doubt the necessity of the special offices of each member, or consider that one may usurp the functions of the other without injury or loss to the body? We have already found, in Christ's acts and teaching, abundant evidence that His Church is intended to be an organised body, with distinction of offices and functions. Are we to deny the reality of such offices, or their value to the Church, be-

cause some of their functions may be performed out of due order by others? Has a king no army, because other of his subjects, who hold no commission from him, can fight bravely and loyally and successfully in his cause? Or have fathers no office in regard to their children, because strangers may supply the love and care of parents? In the Church, office is determined, as we have learnt from Christ's acts and teaching, by a special call and appointment, by defined duties and functions, by corresponding responsibilities, by the gift of adequate powers to enable those, who will faithfully use them, to fulfil their responsibilities; and further, by being a part of an organic and corporate whole, related to the other parts, between all of which there is a mutual interdependence. But we must not here anticipate further that which we shall learn much more fully from the apostolic history and teaching.

I have examined the commission given by Jesus Christ to His apostles in the words recorded by St Matthew, because in those words the complete definition of the office is given, and its perpetuity is clearly manifested. That which is recorded at the close of St Mark's Gospel seems to describe rather the office of the original Twelve, and it is connected with the promise of signs to follow those that believe. The very general account of the whole given by St Luke simply states, that Jesus declared that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in Christ's name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; and that the disciples were to be witnesses of these things. But St Luke adds one instruction of Christ which is to be noticed in connection with our argument. They were to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they should be endued with the power from on high. The gift of that Spirit would

be for the whole Church without exception; but if others needed it for the office and duties of disciples, above all would apostles require it for that high office and those special functions to which they are commissioned.

The Divine Word, by which the new creation is formed, has now been completely uttered; through the successive days of the Son of Man on earth, He has declared the Divine Will in this spiritual universe of God: it only remains for the Divine Spirit to come down, on the ascension of Christ to the right hand of power, in order that the seed of the kingdom of heaven may burst forth into the new forms of life, designed by the Lord Himself, and may develop itself, through the quickening energy of that Spirit, according to the laws of its spiritual growth.

THIRD PART

THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

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(2.) *Presbyters of the Church.*

(3.) *James, the Lord's brother.*

VI. EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH.

(1.) *Conversion of the Samaritans.*

(2.) *The Ethiopian Eunuch.*

(3.) *The Conversion of the Gentiles.*

VII. THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH.

VIII. THE APOSTLE PAUL.

IX. COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

X. APOLLOS.

XI. THE CHURCH IN CORINTH.

XII. RELATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO THE ORDER OF THE CHURCH.

XIII. THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST.

XIV. THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

XV. THE APOSTLE PETER.

XVI. RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE OLD ECONOMY.

THIRD PART.

THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

CHAPTER I.

APPOINTMENT OF MATTHIAS TO THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE.

During the short period that elapsed between the ascension of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, it was not to be expected that any event of great importance should occur. Yet there is one act recorded which is a very significant instance of the principles on which Jesus Christ constituted His Church. It was indeed the immediate exercise of the authority, which was vested in the Church, to make all necessary provision for bearing testimony to Christ in this world. One of the Twelve had fallen from his high estate, and his office was vacant, and, from St Peter's address on this occasion, it seems that no positive instructions had been left by Jesus Christ Himself in regard to this office. But, if it were necessary that the number of twelve apostles should be complete, why, it may be asked, did not Christ Himself determine the question, and before delivering His last charge appoint a successor to the traitor? Why, as He chose the rest of the eleven, did

He not now choose the twelfth? Why, but because, on ascending into heaven, He left, not a mere number of disciples, but a living body that was to represent Him and fulfil His mission, a body capable already through His teaching, and the gifts they had hitherto received, of such action as should be for the time necessary, until the full powers should be conveyed by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Already, with the instinct of the new-born infant, which, before its reasoning faculties are awakened, can put forth some powers to supply present needs, the Church, even before it is endowed with the promised Spirit, has yet discernment sufficient to provide for existing necessities.

We are told that, at this time, the whole number of disciples at Jerusalem being about a hundred and twenty, they used to meet continually for prayer in a large upper room, in which some of the apostles lodged. Such was the primitive Christian Church, and according to Christ's appointment Peter is the chief and leader of this new society. He stands up among them, and the subject of his address, the first sermon in a Christian church, must seem strange to those who regard the kingdom of Christ only as a system of doctrine, or as the mere expression of faith and love. He reminds them that Judas the traitor had held the same office and ministry, which belonged to himself and the other apostles: that his bloody death, evidently the judgment of God, had left his office as one of the Twelve vacant, as indeed had been foretold in the Book of Psalms, which had declared that the habitation of such an one should be empty, and that another should receive his charge and ministry. Therefore, Peter says, as if it followed by necessary consequence that they had in themselves the power to supply that which was want-

ing, it is necessary that of those men, who have been with us during the whole time of our intercourse with the Lord Jesus, from the baptism of John to the ascension, some one should be made witness of His resurrection. Shall we ask what need for this? If such an one had seen and heard these things, why might he not, being thus qualified, give his testimony? The disciples did not ask this, because they had learnt from their Master, that qualifications for an office do not of themselves constitute the office. They concluded from His acts, that it was His will that there should be the complete number of twelve men, whose office should be to give this testimony; and from His teaching, that authority sufficient was given to them to co-opt into their own body one fitted to fulfil the duties of the office.

That there would be something peculiar and special in the method by which this appointment should be made, so as to be unsuitable as a precedent for future action in the Church, might be confidently expected for several reasons. For first the number of those, who would be qualified to unite with the eleven in that special testimony with which the work of the apostolate must begin, must have been very limited indeed; we are almost surprised to find that even two could be found who would answer in all respects to St Peter's description of the person required. Further, the apostles had not as yet received the powers from on high by which all the functions assigned to them were to be exercised. Under these circumstances, the Spirit not yet being present in the Church to declare by them the judgment of God, two men are taken, whom they find to answer to the condition, and prayer is offered that the Lord Himself, who knew the hearts

of all men, would appoint the one whom He had chosen * to succeed to the duties and authority of that apostolic office from which Judas by transgression fell. It was thus referred to the judgment of Christ Himself, who had assured them that though absent He was still present to hear and answer their prayers. They cast lots for the two, and, as the lot fell on Matthias, the unanimous voice and suffrage of the whole body received him as appointed by the Lord Himself to the same office as the eleven. There was not, it would appear, any outward sign at the time to confirm to the minds of the disciples the validity of the appointment; but we find the Twelve together, immediately afterwards on the day of Pentecost,† claiming to be the chosen witnesses of Christ; the signs and wonders wrought by the apostles would mark Matthias as possessing the same powers with the rest,‡ and the Twelve all united together in the exercise of their authority in the government of the Church.

But although the peculiar nature of this appointment, and the absence of the spiritual powers subsequently given to the Church, prevent this act from being a precedent for the future in all respects, yet some important principles as to succession in the apostolic office are already apparent. Especially is that principle which Christ's teaching itself distinctly indicated, of the co-operation and the mutual interdependence of all the members of the body, here clearly illustrated. Peter, the chief of the apostles, authoritatively marks out the course to be followed. The disciples set forth two, who fulfil the necessary conditions, apparently

* *ἀνάδειξον ὃν ἐξελέξω.* Cf. Luke, x. 1, *ἀνέδειξεν ὁ κύριος καὶ ἑτέρους ἑβδομήκοντα.*

† Acts, ii. 14-37.

‡ Acts, v. 12.

the only two who could be found, certainly the only two who were eligible on the whole: for, as the decision was to be remitted to the judgment of Jesus Christ Himself, we cannot suppose that these two would have been selected had there been any comparison between them and others. The *election* and *appointment,* as indicated by the language of the prayer, are made by the will of the Lord expressed in answer to their prayer. And, as they were assured of His answer to that prayer, the suffrages of the whole body recognised the appointment. We have yet to learn how these principles would be applied, when the Spirit of Christ, acting in the Church itself and by the Church as His instrument, shall make this appeal to the direct interposition of Jesus Christ not only unnecessary, but unsuitable for the spiritual kingdom. But assuredly even now there is a certain shadowing forth of that which in after-times was expressed in well-known words, as essential to appointment to the apostolic office in the Church, "*Dei judicium, Episcopatûs* "*consensus, omnium suffragia.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

It appears as if the disciples expected that, during the feast which followed next after the Passover when their Lord was crucified, that promise of the gift of the Spirit would be fulfilled for which they were instructed to wait at Jerusalem, where (Jesus Christ had said) "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost *not* "*many days hence.*" When the day of Pentecost was fully come, — that is, exactly seven weeks from the resurrection, — all were with one consent gathered together. The language seems to imply that it was a larger gathering than usual, none were absent; probably also, disciples from a distance had come to Jerusalem to the feast, and were assembled with their brethren. This meeting was before the third hour of the day, and undoubtedly that early assembly had been for united prayer, probably with breaking of bread according to their Lord's command. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the whole house where they were sitting, and they saw an appearance as of fiery tongues, divided and distributed,* one of which rested on the

* διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι. That is, there was not one sheet of flame, but it was broken up into many tongues, and the appearance was that of numerous small flames descending. Cf. *e.g.* Matt. xxvii. 35; Luke, xxii. 17; Acts, ii. 45.

head of each person present. And all were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues according as the Spirit gave them utterance. Of these signs of the coming of the Holy Ghost, the two first were evidently symbolic; the unseen and mysterious wind was a symbol by which Jesus Christ Himself had taught the manner of the Spirit's operations; the flame of fire, resting on the head of every disciple, represented the power with which the Spirit now endowed them of being, as their Lord had declared them to be, the light of the world. But the "other tongues," with which they were enabled to speak, were more than a mere symbol. The multitude that soon came together to witness this new and strange phenomenon heard these Galileans declaring the praises of God in the divers languages of many countries, from which these Jews of the dispersion and proselytes had come to attend the feast. The profane might mock at this as if it were nothing better than drunken excitement: but the sincere and devout must acknowledge that here was the finger of God. Peter, standing up with the rest of the twelve apostles,—now for the first time fulfilling their office of witnessing for Jesus and the resurrection,—and filled with that Spirit of truth which has been now poured forth, tells the assembled multitude that this is nothing else than the fulfilment of those promises of the Spirit which God had given to their fathers by His prophets; that the Jesus, whom they had delivered to be slain by a violent and cruel death at the hands of the heathen, God had raised from the dead; and He, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, had "shed forth this, which ye" (he said) "now see and hear."

The language of the apostle,* as well as of the history itself, shows plainly that the outpouring of the Spirit on this day was not on the Twelve only, but on the whole body of disciples. The peculiarity of the promise given by the prophet Joel, which St Peter quotes, was that in the latter days the gifts of the Spirit would not be limited to a few prophets and righteous men; all degrees of men, all ages, both sexes, would partake of the Spirit, which should be a universal gift to the whole body, each receiving according to the measure of every part.

But if this gift of the Holy Spirit thus significantly marked His presence with the Church, and was bestowed on all its members, it becomes of the utmost consequence to determine what this gift was. For, being one common to every member, it is an essential element in any inquiry into the organic structure of the Church. That faculty, which belongs in common to every member of a body, needs no distinct organ for its exercise. If all the body were seeing, we should require no separate organ of sight. And therefore, if this gift of tongues were, what it is supposed by some to be, the power of preaching the Gospel in the different languages of the world, it would supply an argument, such as Scripture nowhere else furnishes, against the necessity of a special office for the purpose of teaching all nations. But nothing can be more certain, both from the history of the Acts, and from the description of this gift of tongues given subsequently by the apostle Paul, than that this was no preaching of the Gospel, but an outburst of praise in a language not generally understood by the speaker himself, who, though conscious no doubt of the emotions of devout

* Cf. verse 15, "*These* are not drunken."

joy and thankfulness thus expressed, yet was not aware, unless also he had the gift of interpreting, of the exact meaning of the words uttered by him under this supernatural influence.

This therefore, which the multitude heard on the day of Pentecost, was on the one hand a proof to them of a supernatural presence, because they heard these Galileans speaking in languages known to the hearers and not to the speakers; on the other hand it was the new song of praise of the infant Church, its first *Te Deum Laudamus*, in all the various tongues of the earth. It was a prophetic sign of the work of the Spirit in Christ's Catholic Church which was to include all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. Had it risen in one language only,—that common to all the seed of Israel,—it would not have fitly represented the voice of Christ's Church: but now it is the response to the command of Christ, Teach all nations. No sooner does the Spirit fall upon the Church, than at once, in anticipation of future triumphs, praises are given to God in all languages. This was not the ministry of the Gospel, the witness to Jesus and the resurrection, or the instructing of the disciples in the faith of Christ. That work of the Spirit of truth, one far higher than the gift of tongues, follows afterwards in the address of Peter. He never alludes to these tongues as other than an evidence of the Spirit's presence: had they been given to testify to a risen Saviour, we may be sure he would have appealed to such testimony. But had it been so, his own office as an apostle would have been superseded, and the order of the Spirit's operations deranged.

In the address of St Peter on this occasion, we have the testimony, which it was the office of the Twelve to

deliver, in its simplest form. The facts of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the fulfilment of Scripture in all these things, the sin of the Jews in rejecting and crucifying Him who was made of God both Lord and Christ, were the sum of the apostolic testimony. But accompanied as it was by the witness of the present Spirit, it was abundantly sufficient for the purpose for which it was spoken. The hearers were pricked to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,—for here as elsewhere he was but the mouthpiece of the whole body,—"Brother men, what must we do?" The answer was ready; "Repent and let each of you be "baptised in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remis- "sion of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy "Spirit. For unto you is the promise, and to your "children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the "Lord our God shall call."

The characteristic features of this brief exhortation must be noted. The corresponding words of John the Baptist had been, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of "heaven is at hand," and he proclaimed the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sin. Jesus Christ, at the commencement of His ministry, used the same words as His forerunner, and by baptism, we have seen, admitted men to be His disciples. But now the kingdom of heaven had come and other language is used. In the summons to repentance there is a slight variation. Before, the present tense was used, μετανοεῖτε, be penitent, as if repentance were the highest state to which they could then attain. Now, the tense is used which implies a definite act (μετανοήσατε), repentance being but the step towards a higher state, that of the regenerate children of God.

In all cases the baptism, being ordained for sinful men, is unto the remission of sins: but Christian baptism has a yet diviner blessing; "Ye shall receive the free "gift of the Holy Ghost."

But what is Christian baptism? It is here described as being baptised in the name* of Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly it is that baptism which Christ Himself commanded, "into the name of the Father, and of the "Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But in the Acts of the Apostles, and in their writings, baptism is always described as being "in the name of Jesus Christ," or "into the name of the Lord Jesus," or "calling on the "name of the Lord," or "into Christ Jesus." For to their minds Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, involved the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; nor could any one honour Christ by worship, without at the same time honouring the Father that sent Him, and the Holy Ghost who dwelt in Him without measure. But whether the apostles of Jesus Christ understood His words as prescribing a certain formula in baptism, and not rather as indicating the confession of the faith necessary in baptism and the effect of that sacrament, may be questioned. The definiteness of forms, necessary for a more advanced state of the body, is not found to the same extent in its infancy; and I notice this apparent discrepancy as to the form of baptism chiefly to call attention to the truth, that we must not conclude, because, in the partially-formed and undeveloped Church of the first days of Christianity, some elements are wanting which we account essential, that therefore they are unessential in a later stage of the Church's progress.

The state into which Christian baptism brings those

* ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

that repent is, we have seen, not only that of the forgiveness of sin, but also of receiving the Holy Ghost. "And," Peter continues, "unto you is the promise and "to your children." Not to their children by any law of natural descent, but because all are called to bring their children to Christ, even as they themselves come to receive the blessings of the kingdom.* The new song of praise which the Spirit would inspire the Church to raise would come from infancy as well as from manhood. And not merely for them were these promises given, but, as indicated by that praise being now uttered in all the languages of the nations, for the Gentiles that are afar off from God, even as many as He shall call by the preaching of His Gospel.

St Luke adds, that with many other words the apostle testified (διεμαρτύρετο) and exhorted his hearers, —the word used implying complete instruction in the truths which the apostles had themselves received.† And all that received his word were baptised; and the same day were added to the Church about three thousand souls.

There is no need to suppose that these three thousand, or more than a small part of them, were among the multitude who first were gathered together by the signs and wonders attending the coming of the Holy Spirit. The conviction, awakened in the minds of men by what they saw and heard that day, would spread rapidly at such a time; men would bring their wives, children, households, and friends; during such excitement, from the morning to the evening of that memorable day, there would be a continual inpouring of new hearers and fresh inquirers. We must also remember that at the great feasts Jerusalem was filled with

* See Part II. Chap. X. † Acts, xx. 21, 24; xxviii. 23.

people,—several millions being crowded into a city occupied at other times by not one-tenth of the number,—and the denseness of the population at such a season would increase the facilities of communication.

We must further observe, that the supernatural facts and powers, which on that day awakened the consciences of so many, do not alter the significance of the fact that all, who received the word of the apostles, were at once admitted into the Church by baptism. The apostles were not like their Master, who knew all that is in man, and would not commit Himself at first to those in Jerusalem who professed belief on Him. All, who came professing faith and repentance, they receive without delay or hesitation, seal them with His seal, baptise them into Christ unto the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and thus enrol them in the number of those who are being saved (οἱ σωζόμενοι). That many were on that day baptised who knew not their own hearts nor the meaning of the promises, cannot be doubted; the net of the Gospel from the first enclosed both good and bad; from the first the law of the kingdom was, "Judge not that "ye be not judged."

CHAPTER III.

LIFE OF THE FIRST BELIEVERS ON CHRIST.

THE description of the infant Church, which is given at the close of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is evidently intended as a brief summary, some of the details being supplied in subsequent chapters. Such was the general character of the first Christians immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We naturally turn with much interest, even with curiosity, to this picture of primitive Church life. Here, we imagine, was pure and perfect Christianity before it was defiled by contact with this sinful world; here is the standard to which we should seek to restore the Church, secularised, if not demoralised, by the unspiritual influences which now pervade its action, and by the large admixture of evil with the good within itself. This was indeed the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, very different from all that now claims this holy name. Undoubtedly, in many respects, as Jesus Christ has taught us, the simplicity of infancy is an example to all; and yet manhood is, or ought to be, superior to childhood. Our purpose however, in examining this history, is not to consider it in connection with Christian ethics, but to deduce from it conclusions as to the development in the Christian society of

those principles on which Jesus Christ established His Church.

The brief sketch given by St Luke of these early Christians is as follows: I give an exact rendering of the passage, adopting the text which appears to have most authority;—

"And they were continuing steadfastly in the teach-
" ing of the apostles and the communion, in the break-
" ing of bread and the prayers. And fear came on
" every soul; and many wonders and signs were being
" done by the apostles in Jerusalem. And all who
" believed were together and had all things common;
" and their possessions and goods they were selling and
" distributing to all, according as any one might have
" need; and day by day continuing steadfastly with one
" accord in the temple, and breaking bread in their
" houses, they partook of food with gladness and single-
" ness of heart; praising God and having favour with
" all the people. And the Lord added together day by
" day those who were being saved."

First then we notice, that the description of these believers corresponds with that which Jesus Christ said to the Jews that believed on His word; "If ye con-
" tinue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The word used in the Acts to express continuance implies also firm and persistent adherence; but the truth is the same, of the elementary and incipient belief in Jesus Christ, of which baptism is the appointed seal and expression, developing itself, and ripening into a more perfect faith. And this continued adherence was first of all to the teaching or doctrine of the apostles. The process of "disciple-ing" marked out by Christ in His final charge to His apostles is here exemplified;

first, on a belief in the fundamental truths, baptism into the name of the triune God; then, gradual instruction of the disciples in all things which Jesus had commanded to the Twelve.

But what is the meaning of the continuance of these disciples "in the communion," τῇ κοινωνίᾳ? The English version renders this "in the apostles' doctrine "and fellowship," and many arguments have been raised on this rendering; but such a sense of the words is hardly capable of being defended.* Indeed, independently of this, a larger sense seems the more natural, and better suited to the whole passage; I mean, that which comprehends all that fellowship in the Church, which makes it "the communion of saints:" as Jesus Christ said, "All ye are brethren," and again, "A new "commandment give I unto you, that ye love one "another, as I have loved you: by this shall all men "know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." The having all things common, which is afterwards mentioned, was one expression of this principle of communion; but it was only a temporary accident of the real fellowship of the saints. Indeed the communion, in which the disciples are described as continuing steadfastly, seems primarily to refer to fellowship in religious acts, which are enumerated, "in the breaking of bread "and the prayers."

Of these, unquestionably, "the breaking of bread" was the primitive form of that act of Christian communion, which afterwards acquired the technical name of the Lord's Supper, κυριακὸν δεῖπνον. We may easily understand why this act at first was known among the disciples as "breaking of bread." The apostles, who taught

* Fellowship with the apostles would seem to require the preposition μετά. Cf. 1 John, i. 3, 6, 7.

the new believers all things that the Lord had commanded them, would still retain the vivid recollection of this characteristic action of their Master, often repeated under various circumstances, and always with some spiritual truth underlying it. Whenever He fed the multitudes, He blessed and brake the bread. We cannot indeed doubt that it was customary with Jesus Christ to do this with His disciples, even as He did it in the Last Supper. The disciples at Emmaus at once recognised the Lord in this significant and symbolical action. Although therefore the apostles without doubt obeyed their Lord's commands as to this Christian ordinance, and not only broke the bread, but blessed the cup, in this new Paschal feast, yet the principal action naturally gave the name to the whole. This Christian rite, the highest expression and symbol of communion both with Christ and with one another, was celebrated at first, like the first Passover under the law, with little of that formal observance which afterwards attended it; not in the Temple, where the disciples still met for formal public worship, but at home, probably in such of their houses as were used for their gatherings.

And we might infer with much probability from a following verse, in which "breaking bread in their "houses" is connected with "partaking of food with "gladness and singleness of heart," that this act of Christian communion was so interwoven in their daily life, as to be a part, probably the commencement, of the chief daily meal, of which many of them, living together as much as possible as one community, and having all things common, would partake together. In the journeyings of Israel in the wilderness, every man who wished to eat flesh brought the animal first

to the priest, that it might be sanctified as a peace-offering to the Lord. And thus, at this era of the Christian Church, we may well conceive that every ordinary meal might be consecrated to Christ by this breaking of bread, the token and seal of their spiritual fellowship both with Him and with each other.

The other element in this communion was "the "prayers" (ταῖς προσευχαῖς), that is, the common worship of the new believers. We gather from the account given in this chapter of their continuing daily in the Temple, as well as from Peter and John going to the Temple at the stated hours of prayer, that the disciples at first met there ordinarily for common prayer. As yet the ordinances of the new spiritual temple are but in their germ, nor indeed can they be fully developed, until the Temple of God at Jerusalem shall be overthrown by the coming of Christ in judgment. But certainly if these first converts, with all the freshness and overflowing fulness of spiritual life, with such gifts and powers of prayer as were given them by the Holy Ghost,—of which we find several instances in the early chapters of this book,—yet needed the solemn fixed services of the Temple as means for maintaining spiritual communion with their Lord and with one another, we cannot but conclude that services of a similar nature would form part of the distinctive worship of Christ's Church, when its own system should be matured. It cannot be admitted that this constant fellowship in "the prayers" was but a relic of Judaism retained for a time. If it were unspiritual, and unsuited for the Church of Christ, it would not have been recorded as an effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and a sign of the faith and love of the first converts. We may learn indeed that spirituality does not consist, as some

seem to imagine, in a revulsion from Judaism; it is positive not negative.

The life then of these early Christians, as depicted by the sacred historian, presented these characteristic features;—learning the word of Christ from the apostles; communion with the whole body, manifested, in temporal things by having all things common, in spiritual things by the breaking of bread which showed forth the Lord's death, and by daily common prayers which at that time were offered in the Temple. It was eminently a Church life, although pervading and penetrating their whole daily life. The undeveloped form of this Church life is evident, the seed has been planted, and has sprung up above the ground; it is throwing out new shoots with great vigour; but the forms which the new life will hereafter assume are not yet distinctly apparent; we trace as yet but elementary germs and immature shapes of the order which shall ultimately be evolved.

However, even in this first outgrowth of spiritual life, of which spontaneity is and ever must be a distinctive feature, yet we discern distinctly the great principles of the order established by Jesus Christ, which were never more powerful, or more universally recognised, than in those days. The position which the apostles then occupied was indeed one, which became much modified as the internal powers of the whole society were developed, and as its organisation was extended. At first, it seems, every function centred in them. They alone, if we may judge from the sacred record, possessed any miraculous power beyond the gift of tongues. Peter and John heal the lame man in the Temple. Peter exercises the awful power of condemning the offenders who sinned against the Holy Ghost

" By the hands of the apostles were many signs and " wonders wrought among the people." " Insomuch " that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and " laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the " shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some " of them." The apostles again are the sole teachers of the new society, and they alone preach the Gospel to those that are without. And it is further recorded, and to many this will seem of all the most conclusive proof of the complete and unchallenged authority of the apostles as rulers of this new society,—that those who possessed property sold it and brought the money and laid it down at the apostles' feet. So unreserved and unhesitating was the confidence reposed in them. Certainly, whatever form of polity we may trace in the infant society, those who would deduce from this history arguments for a democratic constitution of the Christian Church must be endowed with singular powers of invention.

In fact we may easily discern in this infant society two powerful principles, which soon must materially affect one another, and which being in opposite directions, though not necessarily antagonistic, must counterbalance one another, and produce combined results, the exact nature of which we cannot as yet predict. One of these is the intense vitality of every part of the body; the other, the authority, it might almost seem unlimited, of its rulers. No other human society, if we may judge from the history of the world, could contain these two principles at the same time in itself, without some violent conflict, if not disruption, being the immediate result. In the Church however the teaching of Jesus Christ, and the influence of the Spirit of truth, not only averted such evil consequences, but also so

directed and controlled these principles as, through their mutual action and combined force, to educe gradually from them the internal relations and true constitution of the Christian body. The apostles had learnt from their Lord, that authority in the Church was not for self-exaltation but for the fulfilment of Christ's purposes; that he that would be greatest must be least; that they were not separate from the rest, but all were brethren, and they were but the ministers by whom the Spirit of Christ expressed His will. On the other hand the disciples, in all the liberty wherewith Christ made them free, knew that by love they must serve one another, and, in the order established by Jesus Christ, they recognised the authority and the wisdom of Him in whom they believed.

It may be argued indeed, that so long as the Church was under the guidance of apostles, appointed by Christ Himself,—"not of men nor by men, but by Jesus Christ "and God the Father who raised Him from the dead," —and therefore possessing plenary powers and authority, which could not be challenged without denying the authority of Christ Himself,—the condition of the Church was wholly exceptional, and can form no precedent for the future. That this condition was indeed one of transition from the period in which Christ Himself was present to that in which the kingdom of heaven would be established among men, and would no longer need any exceptional interference with the ordinary laws of human life, we have already seen reason to conclude. But not only have we abundant indications that the apostolic office in its substance, and therefore the apostolic authority, (for authority is nothing more than the correlative of office) would continue to the end of the world; but we might infer

that such would be the case from the ordinary course of the operations of God. For God, as in nature so also in the government of man, does not work *per saltum*, and suddenly change the laws of His dealings. So that we might expect that as the divine authority of Jesus Christ Himself, received from the Father, passed into that of the apostles, immediately appointed by Him and directly subordinate to Him, so their authority would pass into another form, not needing miraculous gifts to direct its exercise, and yet no less real as an element in the constitution of His Church. In the infant Church we might expect that authority would be of a somewhat different order from that which is required in the matured and perfectly-developed Church; yet manhood, as well as childhood, is the subject of authority, though of a different kind. We might therefore conclude, even independently of those acts and teachings of Jesus Christ which we have before considered, that as in the primitive Church vigorous spiritual life throughout the body coexisted, and was consistent, with the exercise of apostolic authority, the combination of these two elements would be found in every age, in all legitimate action of the Christian Church. The apostles, it must be remembered, although endued with extraordinary gifts, were after all not some divinities, as they are too often regarded, but men of like passions with us. Nor must we forget, that we are studying the history of a society really human although of divine origin, a society in which human nature is not to be overlaid and stifled by something superior to nature, but is to have free play in its legitimate sphere, and is, however purified and ennobled, no other human nature than that which is found in other communities amongst men.

One remarkable feature in this new society, namely that, (in the language of the historian) "they had "all things common," is obviously an additional proof of the rudimentary state of the mutual relations of this sacred fellowship. That it was a temporary expedient to meet a present necessity, arising from the accession of great numbers of the poorer classes at Jerusalem,—an exceptional remedy for an exceptional evil,—no one who has studied the subsequent history of the Church in the New Testament will question. And yet we should be much mistaken if we should deny, that a permanent principle of Church life, necessary in all ages, was here embodied. It was the form, suited for that condition of the Church, in which the fundamental law of the new society,—that all are brethren in Jesus Christ,—then expressed itself. It exhibited practically the teaching of Christ Himself, when in His exposition of the elementary principles of His new kingdom He bids His disciples seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things needful shall be added unto them. It exemplified the truth of the unity of all in Christ, that they were members one of another, and had common interests and feelings. Both as a proof of the power of the new Church life, and as supplying the surest test of the reality of Church life at all times, it is one of the most significant and important facts that the history records. We shall find continually, throughout the history of the apostolic age, that the principles which produced this action of the first disciples and underlie their community of property, are essential elements in the unity of the Church and determine it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST EXERCISE OF DISCIPLINE.

THAT in the influx of many thousand converts into the Church within a short space of time, the good and the bad were gathered in together, is certain. All subsequent experience proves, that, as the history and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself would lead us to expect, the conviction of the truth of His divine mission would powerfully influence many, and produce a belief, destitute indeed of spiritual vitality, which yet would bid defiance to much opposition from unbelievers, and, at a time of a popular movement in favour of the new faith, would acquire great strength. It is impossible, therefore, not to believe that the apostles of Jesus Christ would soon find many indications of the tares and the wheat growing together in the kingdom, and of the unreality, or at least the want of active power, of the faith which many professed. For example, the unwillingness of some to do as others had done, to sell their possessions and goods that they might be distributed among their indigent brethren, might distinctly indicate, and often no doubt did indicate, the absence of the true spirit of disciples. But it belonged not to them, or to the discipline of the Church, to judge in such cases. To their own Master such men must give account, and must ultimately

stand or fall by His judgment. For the chiefest of the apostles to assume authority over such, and dictate to them their line of duty under the penalty of exclusion from the Christian body, would have been not only to assume prerogatives belonging to Christ alone, but to substitute the law for the Gospel. No apostle might say, as his Master, to whom all hearts and all circumstances are perfectly known, once said to the young ruler in order to test his faith :—"One thing thou lack-"est; sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." That the action of the more earnest of the believers at Jerusalem was no law imposed on the new society, that it was not, and could not be, other than voluntary in the fullest sense of the word, is obvious from the history. For the apostles, or for any, to have judged their brethren in such a matter, would have been a breach of the fundamental law, "Judge not that ye be "not judged." But Jesus Christ had also (we have found in examining His teaching) forewarned His disciples that there would be cases in which present judgment would be necessary for the interests of His kingdom and the welfare of His people; offences, which from their pernicious example and influence, and from the form of positive evil which they should assume, would be already ripe for judgment, and would demand the exercise of that authority in the Church which He had committed to His apostles.

Such a case occurred shortly after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, and it is a notable example to all ages of the reality of those spiritual powers, which Christ intrusted to His Church on earth, and which were to be exercised through the apostolic office. A certain man and his wife sold a possession for a cer-

tain price, and brought a portion of the sum, as if it were the whole, and laid it down at the apostles' feet. There was no obligation on them either to have sold the land, or, when it was sold, to have given the whole price, or indeed any portion of it, for the benefit of others. But it is probable that, as men are wont to do, the disciples then generally judged severely those who held back, from whatever cause, and drew invidious and uncharitable distinctions among their neighbours; and Ananias and Sapphira yielded to the temptation of wishing to appear as zealous Christians as others, yet reserving, unknown to their brethren, a certain portion for themselves. Their act implied a positive and deliberate disbelief in the real presence of the Spirit of truth in the Church. The guilt of it was further aggravated by the fact, that it was not done by one in a moment of temptation, but husband and wife had conspired together *to try* the Spirit of the Lord, to put it to the test whether He was present to whom all actions are known. An act like this, however it might be concealed for the time, would secretly spread as a gangrene throughout the body, and eat out its whole life. Moreover, it was a sin fully answering to that, which Jesus Christ Himself pronounced to be beyond forgiveness, a symptom of a spiritual apostasy from which there can be no recovery, a sin against the Holy Ghost and therefore unto death. On such a sin Peter passes public sentence, which is at once confirmed and carried into effect by the death of the offenders.

That Peter alone acts in this first exercise of discipline, was the result of the peculiar circumstances of the case, and of his position as chief of the apostles under Jesus Christ. Prompt and immediate action

was necessary, that the judgment on the sin might be the more apparent, and the reality of the Spirit's presence more clearly demonstrated. Peter knows, by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, not by human testimony, the facts of the offence; there is no need or indeed place for further evidence, for "two "or three witnesses," which in other cases would be required. By the same inspiration he knows also the true character of the offence, for the Spirit of Christ Himself judges. The sentence, "Thou hast not lied "unto men but unto God," is at once confirmed by God's judgment, and it is proved that whatsoever, in the due exercise of his office, the apostle binds on earth shall be bound in heaven: that whosesoever sins the Church, acting as the instrument of Christ's Spirit, retains, they are retained.

Shall we say that the supernatural circumstances which surround this act make it no precedent for the future? But is it not nearer the truth to say, that the knowledge of the facts, and the intuitive and unerring judgment of the true nature of the offence, and the sudden deaths that followed the apostolic sentence, are the accidents belonging to that condition of the Church; but that the substantial and permanent element is the authority at all times residing in the Church, and empowering it, in the due exercise of its functions, to remedy such or similar evils? We shall find, as the history advances, how the exercise of discipline becomes modified as the organic life of the Church is developed. But the fundamental principles of all Church discipline are embodied in this its first and most notable act. We trace here, without difficulty, the three essentials of Church discipline; first, a sufficient knowledge of the

facts; secondly, a discriminating judgment as to the character of the action; thirdly, an authoritative sentence on the person.* All these we shall find fully illustrated as our argument proceeds.

* See Chap. XI. *infra*, on the exercise of discipline in the Corinthian Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

I.—Ordination of the Seven.

We have hitherto considered the history of the first Christians in Jerusalem as representing some universal principles common to the Church of all ages. At first indeed the Jerusalem Church, with the apostolic body at its head and its members coming up to the holy city at the feast, comprehended the whole Church of Christ on earth. But Jerusalem was not the world; the Gospel was soon to extend itself from Jerusalem throughout all nations; before long the Church in that city would be but one Church amongst many, the mother Church indeed, and the metropolis of Christendom, during the transition period when the old Temple was still standing, yet a local, not the universal, society. And in the process of development it would be necessary, that, simultaneously with the extension of the Church from its centre, its local organisation in that centre should be evolved and gradually define itself. We may expect therefore to find, in Jerusalem first of all, the true form of a local Church discovering itself, and growing into that order which would express the fundamental laws of the kingdom of Christ.

We must remember however, that if the Church's

organisation is the result, — as our whole argument maintains,—not of some rules and laws like those of the old covenant, but of a development from elements and principles given by Jesus Christ, it is to be expected that the growth of this new society would present very different phenomena from those which would appear, if the apostles had formed the society, (as is generally imagined that they did,) as the inspired authors of its laws. We must not be surprised therefore when we find, that the first process in the organisation of the Church at Jerusalem arose, not primarily or expressly, out of any desire on the part of the apostles to commit to others some of their spiritual functions, but out of a necessity, forced upon them, of resigning to others local duties which they found unsuitable for their office. As the number of the disciples increased, it was impossible for the apostles, engaged with the higher functions of their office among many thousands of new disciples, and with the multitudes that came in at the time of the great feasts, to give the necessary personal attention to the distribution of alms or food amongst the destitute members of the body, which distribution was hitherto entirely under their authority and direction. A complaint was made by the Hellenistic Jews among the converts, that their widows were overlooked, and that the Hebrew widows were favoured. So apparently trivial was the occasion which led to the first differentiation of office in the Christian Church; and yet it was no light matter, since it proved, that it was in the nature of things impossible that all the functions of administration could be retained, as hitherto, by apostles; that matters touching vital interests of the Church would be neglected, without some distribution of functions; and *therefore* that it must be according

to the will of Jesus Christ that there should be an outgrowth from the apostolate. It is, I think, generally supposed by those who believe in the order of the Church as being of divine origin, and not of human invention, that the institution of the several degrees of the ministry was the result of some definite revelation to the apostles of the method according to which the Church should be ordered. But the order is no less truly divine because, as the history itself indicates, it *grew* in the fullest sense of the word; it grew in the minds of the apostles themselves, and apparently at times in spite of their own reluctance to resign to others any of the functions committed to them; even as the truth of the admission of the Gentiles into the Church on equal terms with the Jews forced its way in spite of the prejudices which some of them but slowly shook off. The final adjustment indeed of this organisation of the universal Church was a work of much time, and was the result of matured experience, as well as of circumstances gradually pointing to definite conclusions and determining the fixed relations of the body. I see in no part of the process any indication of a revelation of the order to be followed; but we may find abundant proofs of the apostles being guided, sometimes no doubt unconsciously, towards a divine order which ultimately became both definite and universal.

The history on the present occasion is a very remarkable instance of the development of the Church, under the direction of the apostles indeed, yet much more by the ordering of divine Providence than by any will of theirs. It is recorded that when the apostles heard of these complaints of neglect in the daily administration, they called together the multitude of the disciples and said,—(it is difficult not to think

there is a slight trace of annoyance in the first sentence),—"It is not our pleasure that we should leave "the word of God and serve tables. Look out therefore "men from among yourselves, well reported of, seven "in number, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, "whom we will appoint over this business. But we "will give ourselves constantly to prayer and the "ministry of the word." And the proposal pleased the whole multitude, and they chose seven men whom they presented to the apostles; and when they had prayed they laid their hands upon them.

Now here there are several points to be noticed. That which was proposed by the Twelve, as the solution of the difficulty, belonged undoubtedly to their office, as the rulers of the Christian society, to determine, and therefore it was decided by them with full apostolic authority. Yet the history says not, "So the "people obeyed the apostles and did so and so," as it might have been said in the Old Testament of a command of the Lord given through Moses; but, "It "pleased the whole multitude;" (ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους) the concurrence of the whole body being the seal to those acts, even of apostles, which concerned all. Again the selection is by the people. It may indeed be argued that this was merely to a *quasi* secular office of distributing alms, of the qualifications for which the multitude might judge as well as apostles; but that in the case of a truly spiritual office the conditions are altered. However that the apostles considered this to be a spiritual office is evident; it was originally part of their own office; they directed men to be chosen full of the Spirit and of wisdom; and further, they appoint those who are chosen with prayer and the laying on of hands, separating and consecrating

them to the office by the most solemn act. What the office was, we shall consider presently: but we must notice that, while the selection and presentation were by the whole body of the disciples, the final responsibility of the appointment rested with the apostles alone, who by this act delegated to those who were chosen some of their own functions, and such authority as was necessary for the discharge of this subordinate ministry.

The solemn act of ordination is here mentioned for the first time in the apostolic history, and as this significant rite is intimately connected with the question of the organisation of the Church, we must not pass it over without some examination of its meaning. By Jesus Christ Himself the laying on of hands seems to have been used only as the sign of blessing. There is no indication in the Gospels that He laid His hands on the apostles, when committing to them their office and ministry, and we can hardly imagine that an act so significant would have passed without mention. We shall, I think, find sufficient reason to conclude, that the act would have been unsuitable to represent the relation between Christ and those whom He appointed to be His own ministers. To understand its meaning we must refer to the Old Testament. We have already, in our brief examination of the religious organisation of the older economy, observed traces of another principle of succession to office and delegation of authority besides that of natural descent. The most remarkable instances may be found in the history of Moses, and all of them arose out of circumstances not very dissimilar from those which we have noticed in the Acts of the Apostles. First, it will be remembered that, on the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, to relieve him of the

burden of judging the people a complete system of judges and magistrates was organised by him. Then, at a later time, when Moses complained of the burden of government, the Lord commanded him to gather seventy men of the elders of the people and to set them before the tabernacle; "and I will take of the spirit "that is upon thee and will put it upon them; and "they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, "that thou bear it not alone." And when the spirit rested on these seventy men "they prophesied and "did not cease." Thus far we find a striking parallel between the conduct of Moses and that of the apostles under similar circumstances. But there is another, towards the close of the life of the great lawgiver, which as regards the act of appointment is far more complete. When Moses was warned that his end was approaching (Num. xxvii. 15-23), and that he would not be permitted to lead the children of Israel into the land of promise, he prays that "the Lord, the God of the "spirits of all flesh" would set * a man over the congregation who might be the leader of the people, "that "the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep without "a shepherd." The resemblance here to New Testament language is sufficiently remarkable, and still more so in that which follows. "And the Lord said to "Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in "whom is the spirit and lay thy hands upon him; and "set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the "congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. "And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, "that all the congregation of the children of Israel "may be obedient." "And Moses did as the Lord

* ἐπισκεψάσθω, Sept. Cf. in the account in the Acts, ἐπισκέψασθε ἀνδρὰς ἑπτα.

" commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him " before Eleazar the priest and before all the congrega- " tion. And he laid his hands upon him, and gave " him a charge as the Lord commanded Moses." Now here is a principle of succession to office, and delegation of a charge with authority, identical with that which has been indicated in the New Testament for the Church of Christ, so far as we have traced it hitherto. A man already tried and tested, — ἀνὴρ μαρτυρούμενος, — a "faithful and wise servant," in whom is the spirit, is taken, and to him an office is committed by the laying on of hands, with a charge as to the duties of the office. And the appointment to the office is followed by an increase of the spiritual gifts required for the office. "Joshua the son of Nun," it is added in the last chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, " was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses " had laid his hands upon him." And yet, though thus succeeding to the office of Moses, it must be further observed that Joshua did not succeed to the personal powers and prerogatives of his predecessor; for it is added, " There arose not a prophet since in " Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to " face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord " sent him to do." Surely the principle of such a succession, as is required for the Church of Christ on the removal of those apostles " whom the Lord knew " face to face," is here not obscurely shadowed forth. And the significant act of laying on of hands is used on this occasion,—and only on this occasion, so far as we can judge from the records of the Old Testament,— where the language itself seems almost to bring us into New Testament times. Indeed " the higher criticism " must of course determine these passages to be an inter-

polation since the Christian era; but as we are compelled, in these investigations, simply to accept Scripture as received by Christians, we must consider the passage to be a most remarkable, we might almost say a prophetic, anticipation of that which from the times of the apostles to the present day has been held by the majority of Christians to be the true law of succession in the Church of Christ.

Whether or not the apostles had before their minds this most pertinent and instructive precedent, we may be assured that the same Spirit of God, who directed Moses, also guided them as to the form and manner of delegating to others "some of their honour" by an outward and visible sign, by which the gifts of the Spirit necessary for the office are conveyed to those who are ordained thereto. But what was this office? The first occasion of the institution of the office was undoubtedly the need of others besides the apostles to superintend the "daily administration," and undertake responsibilities which were found to be inconsistent with their own highest functions. But it by no means follows that the apostles would have intrusted these duties to any, whom they did not admit to a larger share of their own functions than is implied in the mere distribution of alms. We might conclude with some confidence that they would not do so; that this ministration, having been originally part of the apostolic office, would not be committed to any who were not also intrusted with some share in the spiritual government of the Church. The apostles do not make light of this portion of their own duties, or say,—as St Paul said with regard to ordinary disputes among Christians,—"If ye have judgments of "things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who "are least esteemed in the Church." They evidently

consider that the Seven are to be admitted to a subordinate share of their own office and ministry, in order that they might themselves be at liberty to *continue uninterruptedly* (προσκαρτερήσομεν) in its higher duties. And it will be observed that in the parallel case of Moses, under divine direction, constituting the body of seventy elders to share the government of the people with himself, this was no mere secular office, but when the Spirit rested upon them "they prophesied and ceased not." Might not this very parallel have been present to the minds of the apostles? The fact that they fixed on the typical number of seven evidently indicates, that they considered they were not merely making an appointment to serve a present necessity, but instituting an office; even as their Lord Himself took the typical number twelve, in instituting their office. And this view is entirely borne out by the history. Whilst it says nothing whatever of the ministration of the alms by the Seven, but leaves us to conclude that the complaints of insufficient care were removed through this subdivision of duties, it proceeds at once to record the spiritual functions discharged by some of the Seven. The result of this new institution was, that "the word "of God increased, and the number of disciples multi- "plied in Jerusalem greatly." It is recorded, that after their appointment members of the Seven at once exercised powers which, as far as we can judge from the history, had been before confined exclusively to the apostles. First they wrought signs and wonders, casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick (Acts, vi. 8; viii. 6, 7, 13). Secondly they preached Jesus and the resurrection. Thirdly they made and baptised disciples (Acts, viii. *passim*). Whether or not these functions may be exercised in the Church by those who do

not partake of the apostolic office, is, as I have repeatedly observed, not the question; but that they belong to the office instituted by Jesus Christ, no one will doubt who has attained to any conception of the meaning of the office as expounded by Christ's own acts and teaching. And the functions having been hitherto exercised by apostles only, and after the ordination of the Seven exercised by them also, we can draw no other conclusion from the history but that the office intrusted to the Seven did include these functions of the apostolate. On the other hand that the highest powers of the apostles were not committed to the Seven is evident, first from the occasion and circumstances of their appointment; secondly from the fact that when Philip, one of the number, had preached the Gospel in Samaria and baptised the converts, it was necessary for apostles to complete the work, in order that by prayer and the laying on of their hands the baptised might receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

It has been generally held in the Christian Church that the appointment of the Seven was the institution of the order of deacons, and, inasmuch as the charge of the daily ministration was committed to them, and was the first occasion of the appointment, and as the functions assigned to them comprehended those of the lowest order of the ministry, according to the subsequent organisation of the Church, the truth of this cannot be denied. And yet not only are the Seven never called deacons in the New Testament, but there is sufficient reason to conclude, as we shall find presently, that their office included that of presbyters or elders. The important fact as bearing on our argument,—and it is a fact of the utmost significance,—is this; that the delegation of a certain portion of the apostolic functions

took place as soon as the requirements of the local Church in Jerusalem called for it, and that it followed principles indicated by the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, such delegation of office being effected by a definite symbolical rite, which was followed by the gift of the spiritual powers necessary for the discharge of its spiritual duties.

II.—The Presbyters or Elders of the Church.

The Acts of the Apostles throw very little light on the subsequent history of the original body which was known by the name of the Seven, as the apostles were by the name of the Twelve. The most eminent of them, Stephen, was martyred shortly afterwards, and is the protomartyr of the Church. Philip, who stood second on the list, was driven from Jerusalem by the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen, and went from place to place preaching the Gospel till he came to Cæsarea, where we find him some twenty-five years afterwards, and he is called "the evangelist;" so that we must conclude that the charge committed to him at Jerusalem was administered by others. Of the remainder of the Seven we learn nothing except from very doubtful traditions. But that the office instituted in their appointment was continued in the Church in Jerusalem we have ample proof. Some six years after the ordination of the Seven, collections were made in the Gentile Church in Antioch "for the brethren that "dwelt in Judea," and Barnabas and Saul were the bearers of these contributions to Jerusalem. But they were not to do,—what Barnabas himself had done when he sold his own possessions,—lay these gifts at the apostles' feet; they were to deliver them to a body

of men, now for the first time designated elders or presbyters of the Church. Who then were these, who now took the place of the apostles, as having the charge of the alms given for the relief of the indigent brethren in the Jerusalem Church? The natural and obvious conclusion from the history would be, that these presbyters held the office, the institution of which is described in a previous chapter, since we find them exercising the very duties, the necessity for which was the occasion for that institution. But unhappily most expositors of the sacred history have their minds so preoccupied by their knowledge of the subsequent developments of the Church, that they seem incapable of reasoning freely by induction from historical facts; and we are told that the Seven, who had the ministration of the alms, were deacons or something like deacons; but that the elders, who also received contributions for this purpose, were a different class of men: the only conceivable reason for this capricious interpretation of the history being, that deacons ultimately in the Church had the ministration of alms, as the Seven had; whilst those who are represented in the history as acting for the apostles, and receiving the alms, are not called deacons but presbyters. Is it not more reasonable to infer, that the office instituted in the ordination of the Seven was originally one, and that its subsequent division into two orders,—of which we find no express mention till some five-and-twenty years afterwards,*—was the result of circumstances somewhat similar to those which led the apostles to assign some of their own functions to the Seven? That is, even as the apostolic office was relieved, and rendered more efficient for the purposes for

* In Philip. i. 1.

which it was ordained, through the institution of a subordinate office which exercised some of its functions; so again this second order, to which the general name of presbyters or elders was given, was made more efficient by a further differentiation, that is by the institution of a third order, to which the inferior ministrations of the original office of the presbyters were assigned.

The history of this period, during which the true organisation of the Church was developing itself, must determine what was the process and extent of this differentiation of office. But this must be observed, that the original of all these is the apostolic office as ordained by Jesus Christ; and therefore no office can be the result of this differentiation, that is, can be a part of the apostolic ministry of the Church, the functions of which were not originally comprehended in those of the apostles themselves.

For the present it is sufficient to observe, that henceforward, in the history of the Church both in Jerusalem and elsewhere, the existence of a second order, subordinate to the apostles but sharing with them the local administration of the Church, to which order the technical designation of presbyters or elders was first given,—is an indisputable fact. The title was evidently transferred to them from the Jewish organisation,—not the sacerdotal, but that which originated in the time of Moses for the government of the people, and continued, amidst many changes, to the times of the New Testament. It was a title not necessarily, even among the Jews, implying seniority in age, but rather expressing the wisdom, experience, and authority which age ought to possess. In the Christian Church, although men of matured experience were naturally more fitted

for the office than younger men, yet advanced age was certainly not a necessary qualification for an office of authority. The Lord Himself was only thirty years old when He began His ministry; and it is probable that the apostle John was younger than Jesus. We find subsequently Timotheus, comparatively a young man (1 Tim. iv. 12), not only a presbyter, but set over presbyters and commissioned to ordain them. Nor is age one of the qualifications mentioned by St Paul in his pastoral epistles. In secular history we find similar changes in the use of corresponding terms, with the progress of human society. In the ancient *gerusia* or council of elders at Sparta no one was eligible till he was sixty years of age; the Roman senate, as its name implies, was originally an assembly of venerable men of advanced age, but after the time of Augustus the *ætas senatoria* was twenty-five.

The office which grew up in the Christian Church with this title was undoubtedly no mere charge of "tables," but, in the highest degree next to the apostolate, a spiritual charge and ministration. The apostles and presbyters united together, as participating in the same spiritual functions, in the decision at Jerusalem on the question of circumcision. In St Paul's address to the presbyters of the Church in Ephesus he reminded them that the Holy Ghost had committed to them the pastoral charge of the flock and Church of the Lord there, which He had purchased with His own blood. St Peter charges presbyters to be faithful shepherds of the flock of God that was amongst them; and he speaks this, he says, as being a fellow-presbyter with them, for indeed most of the strictly spiritual functions of the pastoral office, of those that deal directly with the consciences of men, are common to

presbyters and apostles. We shall however examine this question of the office of the presbyter more fully at a later stage of the history, when we consider the pastoral epistles of St Paul: and we shall then see further, how, as the office threw off from itself another order of ministers, it at the same time acquired a new title indicating the more defined spiritual functions, which belonged to it in the ultimate organisation of the spiritual body.

As regards the mode of appointment to the office of a presbyter, if, as we have seen reason to conclude, the ordination of the Seven was the institution of an order which included the presbyters, that act of the apostles has sufficiently indicated its nature. On the other hand, if it is still supposed that the functions of the Seven were only those of the order which was afterwards known as the diaconate, we might certainly infer, that if the solemn and significant act of ordination was necessary for the Seven, much more would it be needful for those, who, according to this theory, hold a much larger share of the apostolic office. And, if in the former case the ultimate appointment was by apostles, much more in the latter. Indeed of such appointment and ordination of presbyters by apostles, and by those who received full authority from apostles so to appoint and ordain, we have abundant proofs in the subsequent history. With regard to the part that the laity had in such appointments, the account which we have already examined of the first ordination, in its technical sense, in the Church of Christ affords sufficient guidance; it being observed, that, whilst the selection and presentation (so to speak) proceeded from the whole body, the responsibility could not rest in other hands but those of the apostles, from whom the

delegation of office and consecration to its duties proceeded. And therefore we need not be surprised if we find hereafter the appointment to such an office spoken of as belonging only to apostles. Thus it is recorded that Paul and Barnabas after their first missionary journey, in which the Gospel had been preached in Pisidia, visited the cities a second time shortly afterwards, and then ordained for the disciples presbyters in every church, with prayer and fasting. For the word there used (ἐχειροτόνησαν) does not imply in the New Testament language election by a show of hands, as it did originally in classical Greek. It is used of the selection and appointment of the apostles by God Himself to be witnesses of Christ;* so that, if we insist on the exact meaning of this word, it must imply here that the apostles chose and appointed the presbyters, even as the Twelve themselves were chosen by God. That this appointment however was made in concurrence with the judgment of the disciples over whom these presbyters were placed, we may well suppose; and the testimony of the rest of the disciples must necessarily be, in most cases, one of the most important elements in judging, who is the faithful and wise servant, worthy to be intrusted with the charge of the household. But that the popular voice going before, however generally expedient and even necessary in some instances, is an essential part of a legitimate appointment to the pastoral office, is a theory which receives no confirmation from the New Testament, and is expressly contradicted by the very word to which some have hastily appealed in its favour.

* Acts x. 41. Προκεχειροτονημένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

III.—James, the Lord's Brother.

We enter now upon one of the most important questions in the whole history of the Church's development: important, not merely because an agreement among Christians as to the teaching of the New Testament here is absolutely essential to any visible and corporate unity, but above all because the truth of the continuance and perpetuity of the apostolic office, as plainly foretold by Jesus Christ before His ascension, is involved therein. But I would here first observe, that it must be no matter of surprise to us, that even the most essential elements of Church organisation are to be discovered, not from some command of Christ or His apostles, or from the surface of the history, but by patient analysis. For our very argument is, that these are not laws like those of the old economy; in which case they would be described with the same exactness, and would be fenced in by the same restrictions, as the Levitical institutions in the law of Moses. But being, on the contrary, laws like those of nature,—an order to be followed if we would attain to its results,—silent but necessary outgrowths from inner and yet deeper and more universal principles,—we must expect to determine them, even as we determine those of the physical world, through a process, which, however unsatisfactory to minds which can rest only on positive dogma, is yet far more consonant with those habits of thought and feeling that are formed in the school of Christ.

We have already found, in the ordination of the Seven, and in the existence of a body of presbyters in Jerusalem, proofs of important changes in the adminis-

tration of the local Church in that city. But contemporaneously with these changes we find traces of a modification in the apostolic government of the Church, which indicates yet more clearly the transition to a definite form of organisation in this metropolitical city of Christendom. At first the Church there, being the one Christian community, was immediately under the government of the whole apostolic body, and Peter as the chief of the twelve apostles was the most prominent figure in Jerusalem. But there were sufficient reasons for some change in this respect, as the Gospel began to spread from Jerusalem among the Jews of the dispersion and the Gentiles. The sphere for the Twelve was not Jerusalem but the world. The charge committed to them was universal; they were not appointed to direct and administer one Church however important, but to be the witnesses for Christ, of His words and works, among all people; to be the founders of that Catholic Church which was to be established in every nation under heaven. And besides this, even if some of them had permanently remained in Jerusalem, the administration of the Church there by a body of apostles, with other duties belonging to their office, would have been not only inexpedient, but inconsistent with a principle which we have found distinctly recognised in the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ; I mean that every pastoral charge is a personal charge. Experience of human life abundantly proves the advantage of responsibilities not being divided. And the necessity for this is far stronger in the Church of Christ, since in spiritual things responsibilities act only through the conscience which is a man's personality. I do not now assume that this principle, the truth of which must be acknowledged by every thoughtful mind, would necessarily

produce a particular form of Church government: this we must determine from the history itself. I merely point out that, if such a principle be admitted, it would naturally lead to the apostolic charge of the Church at Jerusalem being committed to one rather than to many. And of this we find distinct indications at this period of its history. When Saul of Tarsus first visited Jerusalem some three or four years after the ordination of the Seven, we learn from the history that the disciples were at first afraid of their former persecutor, until Barnabas took him and brought him to *the apostles* who were there, and then the disciples received him; and he was with them "coming in and going out" at Jerusalem. But Paul himself, in his Epistle to the Galatians, tells us expressly who these apostles were. He says that he went to Jerusalem in order to make the acquaintance of Peter, with whom he remained fourteen days. But (he adds*) "other of the apostles "saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." Now it must be observed here, that he refers to his seeing James, both as if it were a matter of course that this James would be seen by him at Jerusalem, and also as though his intercourse with him were not of so much consequence, with reference to his argument, as if he had seen any other apostle; and his argument is that his opportunities of conferring with those who had been the primary sources of the Christian faith were very limited. Again, shortly after, at the very time when the presbyters at Jerusalem are first mentioned, Peter, having been miraculously delivered out of prison, bids those, to whose house he first came, take the news of his deliverance to "James and the brethren,"

* Gal. i. 19. *Ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον, εἰ μὴ Ἰακωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Κυρίου.*

the only possible explanation of which is that James was in some sense the official head of the Church. But further, as we shall find in our examination of the council held some years afterwards at Jerusalem, James again appears among the apostles, speaking with even more conclusive authority than Peter himself; whilst, in St Paul's account of that important conclave, James is placed before Peter and John as a pillar of the Church.* St Paul further describes Jewish converts who came from Jerusalem to Antioch as having come "*from James:*" and finally, when Paul came up to Jerusalem the last time, and wished to meet the Church there and discuss with them matters of importance, it is said that he went in, with his companions, to James; and all the presbyters were present. It is impossible for any unprejudiced mind not to conclude from a comparison of all these passages, that this James was the president, or by whatever other title we may call him, of the Church in Jerusalem; that he was in some sense or other, an apostle; that he ranked with the Twelve, even taking precedence of Peter in the Jerusalem Church, although Peter was, no less than before, the apostle of the circumcision, and the first of the twelve apostles. In other words, to use that technical term which was assigned exclusively to the office when the Church attained its maturity, and which has continued to the present day, James was the bishop of the Church in Jerusalem.

This conclusion is no less certain, whether this James was one of the original Twelve or not. But certainly for one of the Twelve to hold an office of this nature seems inconsistent with the special mission which they

* Gal. ii. 9. Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στύλοι εἶναι.

received from Jesus Christ. Their charge was universal, and could not have been thus limited to a particular city without some dereliction of their true functions. But in fact there is abundant proof that, as we should infer from St Paul's casual notice of him, James the Lord's brother was not one of the Twelve, and that the theory which identifies him with James the son of Alpheus, or Cleopas, is untenable. It is evident from the Gospel history that "the Lord's brethren,"—among whom James is mentioned, apparently as the eldest,—not only were not among His chosen apostles, but did not even believe on Jesus during His ministry. Shortly after the appointment of the Twelve, we find the brethren and mother of Jesus coming to speak with Him while He was teaching, apparently with the intention of withdrawing Him from a scene in which He was exciting the hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees.* These brethren are also spoken of by the people of Nazareth, in language wholly inconsistent with the supposition that they were sons of Alpheus, and two of them apostles of Jesus: "Is not this the carpenter, the "son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and "Judas and Simon? and are not his sisters here with "us?"† When to this it is added that St John expressly states,‡ that at a time, probably only six months before the crucifixion, certainly long after the appointment of the apostles, His brethren did not believe on Him; and further, when we find the brethren of Jesus expressly distinguished from the Twelve when they first appear in the history as believers, that is after the ascension;§ and when we observe that in none of the lists of the Twelve is James the son of

* Mark, iii. 31.
† Mark, vi. 3.
‡ John, vii. 5.
§ Acts, i. 14.

Alpheus called the Lord's brother, or in any way identified with the James, well known when the Gospels were written as presiding over the Church in Jerusalem, it must require very conclusive evidence indeed on the other side to make us believe that James the Lord's brother was one of those disciples who had been with Jesus throughout His ministry, and who were appointed by Him to be His apostles. And yet the only reasons for the identity of these two persons that deserve any consideration are, first that James the son of Alpheus also had a brother, one of whose names was Judas, which is by no means certain,* and if it were proves nothing at all; then that James, being probably the cousin of Jesus, might be called His brother, which is very doubtful, and does not in the least account for his being classed in the family of Jesus at Nazareth; especially when we consider that both Cleopas himself and his wife Mary were alive at the time. Other reasons however have probably weighed more with the supporters of this theory. One of these is the difficulty as to the actual relationship of these brethren of Jesus to Him. Into this we need not enter, nor ought it to be allowed in the slightest degree to affect conclusions from the history. The other is, that James the Lord's brother could not have ranked as an apostle at so early a period, or held the high position which was assigned to him in the council at Jerusalem, unless he had been one of the original Twelve. But this is merely to assume the question at issue, and to interpret the history according to a preconceived theory.

Although therefore the fact that James the Lord's brother was the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem

* Ἰούδας Ἰακώβου (Acts, i. 13) is more probably *the son* than *the brother* of James.

remains the same, whether or not he were one of the original Twelve, yet I take it as proved that he was not. He was however an apostle, and no less certainly an apostle than Peter himself. But what does this mean? Not that James, who had been, throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ, an alien and unbeliever, was or could be a witness to the works and words of Jesus Christ as the Twelve were. Nor that he had received the direct mission from Jesus Christ which the first apostles had received, and which St Paul received from his ascended Lord.* Nor yet that his charge was universal and unlimited, as the original apostolic charge certainly was, and as the apostle Paul's was subsequently. But that he had powers and functions of the same order, committed to him no less truly by Jesus Christ, although they came, not immediately from Him, but through those to whom Christ gave authority to supply all that was wanting, and to continue their own corporate existence even to the end of the world. He was, as far as we can judge from the history, the first offshoot from the apostolic body in which the apostolic office, with all its permanent functions, was reproduced; the first example of the method through which that office would be perpetuated, and the last charge and promises of Jesus Christ fulfilled. I say, a sufficient example of the method, because when

* St Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7) mentions that one of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection was to James, who can hardly have been any one else than the Lord's brother. Indeed, we might infer that the conversion of the Lord's brethren took place between the crucifixion and ascension; for after the latter they are mentioned, together with Mary His mother, as in fellowship with the disciples: whereas the fact that Jesus, when dying, committed Mary to the charge of John seems to imply that His own brethren were not then disciples. But the appointment of Matthias proves that James had not been designated by the Lord Himself as an apostle.

we find at first the original apostles exercising plenary powers in the Church at Jerusalem, and then James in charge of that Church with apostolic authority, and recognised by the apostles as holding that office, this change cannot be supposed to have been effected except by the action of those apostles; and what that action would be, the ordination of the Seven sufficiently indicates. That such a change may have taken place through the concurrent action of the whole multitude of the disciples there; that the discovery of the necessity of having, so to speak, an apostle for themselves, was made first by the Church which needed such pastoral superintendence,—is highly probable. We may easily suppose that the multitude would themselves have selected one so eminent as the Lord's own brother, so highly gifted with the spirit of wisdom as we shall hereafter find James to have been, and at the same time with such strong sympathies with Jewish feelings and habits as the first bishop of Jerusalem undoubtedly manifested. There is no reason to suppose, that this first extension of the apostolate originated in the consciousness of the Twelve that such a change in the government of the Jerusalem Church was necessary for the due order of the Church: it was, much more probably, like the ordination of the Seven, the result of circumstances, an outgrowth of the apostolic office according to the organic law of its corporate life.

This may seem too large a conclusion to draw from that which some students of the New Testament consider uncertain premises, I mean that James the Lord's brother was not one of the Twelve. But on the one hand, there would not be any doubt at all on this point, if the historical records alone were to decide, and our part, if we would arrive at any certain conclusions,

is to discover the true character of the apostolic office from the history, not to force the history to square with our notions of the office. But on the other hand, the conclusion, weighty as it is, does not rest on this instance alone. It is an inevitable conclusion from the words of Jesus Christ, that there must be such an outgrowth of the apostolate: and we shall find as we proceed in the history other examples. The case of James the Lord's brother is however more instructive for the very reason that the whole evidence is circumstantial rather than direct: the fact, that we arrive at the conclusion through casual notices in the history, proves that the appointment of one to be an apostle who did not belong to the Twelve was nothing that in itself required explanation as anomalous and uncommon. The appointment of the apostle Paul was altogether an exception to the order, and therefore is fully explained, as we shall find hereafter.

And the other conclusion from the notices of James, as to the organisation of the Church at Jerusalem, follows, as I have observed, with equal certainty whoever this James may have been. And this of itself is a sufficiently important conclusion. We gather that the form, which the Church assumes as it is locally organised, is that of a community under one head with apostolic functions, and a body of presbyters subordinate to him. Now it is true that, if it could be proved that James the Lord's brother were originally an apostle, and if there were no similar instance in the subsequent development of the Church, we could not conclude with the same certainty that this would be the normal type of the Church's organisation. It might then be argued, that such a type was only possible with one, who was, in the fullest sense of the term, an

apostle of Jesus Christ. And yet none but a superficial mind could rest satisfied with this: because the inquiry at once would arise, why should a form of local organisation obtain at Jerusalem, which could not obtain generally throughout the Church, and which in the following generation would be, according to this theory, an impossibility everywhere? Why in short should the Church in Jerusalem be an exception and an anomaly? If, for example, the organisation of a Church through a body of presbyters were the normal type, or even were sufficient, why is an exceptional type introduced into Jerusalem? Surely if a bishop, in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, were needed there, much more would such an office be necessary in Churches among the Gentiles. Nor can it be replied, that this is not a question of what was expedient, but what was possible: for this would be to deny the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, and expressly to contradict His last promise to the Eleven. On the other hand, to argue that the form which the Church in Jerusalem assumed was suitable for an infant Church, but that other forms, or no definite form at all, would be adapted for a more matured state of the Christian society, is to suppose that the development of this society is from the definite to that which is less defined, in other words that it does not follow the fundamental laws by which all real development is governed, and that it is therefore something unnatural and abnormal.* Whereas the transition, from a general government by apostles to the constitution of the local Church under one apostle with a body of presbyters, is manifestly from the indefinite to the definite, and is real growth of the organisation. Although we could not have assumed *a priori* that

* See Introduction, p. 17.

any particular definite form would have been the result of development, because the history alone can teach us in what direction, and to what extent, further development can proceed consistently with the primary laws which form the Christian society; yet the definite form having been once legitimately produced, we may be assured that it cannot pass, through the true action of those laws, into one that is less defined, or more homogeneous.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH.

I.—Conversion of the Samaritans.

THE last commands of Jesus Christ to His apostles, as recorded by St Luke in his Gospel and in the Acts, seem to mean, that as soon as they should be endued with the power from on high by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, they should go forth beyond Jerusalem to preach the Gospel. Nothing, however, was done in fulfilment of these instructions of their Lord, until a violent persecution burst upon the Church in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen. We have here again another proof that the development of the Church was much less through the conscious and intentional action of the apostles, than through causes which they could not control. The effect of the persecution was, the historian says, that "all were dispersed throughout the "regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles." Of course we need not suppose that all the thousands of disciples, men, women, and children, left Jerusalem. When we read that "Jerusalem and all Judæa and all "the region round about Jordan" went out to John the Baptist, we do not imagine that all the cities and countries were left empty. St Luke means, no doubt, that all the leading men left, and many emigrated

with their families to other parts. Some, for example, we find in Damascus. Everywhere as they went, they carried the glad tidings of the word of life. The argument drawn from this, that no office or commission is required for publicly preaching the Gospel in the Church of Christ, only proves how little those who use it have considered the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles, or understand what office means. At all events, the only preacher of the word who is mentioned is Philip, one of the Seven, who undoubtedly was appointed to some office in the Church by the laying on of the apostles' hands, and who is subsequently called "the "evangelist." And he entered on a new field, where the Twelve, during the lifetime of Jesus Christ, had been forbidden to labour, but which was named in His last commands as having, next to Jerusalem and Judæa, the first claim upon His Church. Philip, in obedience to His Lord's directions, went down to the chief city of Samaria and preached Christ to them, and his testimony was confirmed by many remarkable miracles. Hitherto the Samaritans had been seduced by one of those strange impostors who abounded in the latter times of Jewish history, to whom they gave some mystical title believing him to be the great manifestation of divine power;—yet when they heard Philip preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised both men and women. It is probable that this city was the same, in the neighbourhood of which Jesus Himself, seven or eight years previously, had pointed out to His disciples fields already white for the harvest, and where His own preaching had won the hearts of many. He had thus prophetically indicated the direction in which His Church would first extend itself. And it is a very

singular coincidence, to say the least, that here, first of all, in the history of the Church, there is a notable illustration of the principle of division of labour and functions in the Christian ministry, which Jesus Christ on that occasion taught His disciples as one of the fundamental laws of His kingdom.* The saying was literally fulfilled here, "One soweth and another reap-"eth." Philip laboured and the apostles did but enter into his labours. We see also here, how, as the Church begins to expand itself, all the laws of its development, taught by Jesus Christ, one by one discover themselves. For as soon as the apostles that were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God "they sent to them Peter and John, who when "they were come down prayed for them, that they "might receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet It had "fallen upon none of them; only they had been bap-"tised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they "laid their hands upon them, and they received the "Holy Spirit."

Now here, first of all, there is an important principle established, of which we have already seen indications and shall soon find others, namely, that the full apostolic power resided in the apostles as a body, and that every one individually, even Peter the chief of the apostles, was subordinate to the decisions of the body. The word here used † of their mission is the same as is used of the mission of the apostles by Christ Himself. But again, it may be asked, why was it necessary that apostles should visit these new converts? And to this the history supplies one answer that is sufficient, namely, that the Samaritans had only been baptised, ‡

* See Part II. Chap. IX. (II.) p. 152.

† *ἀπέστειλαν.* ‡ *μόνον βεβαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον.*

and had received no gifts of the Holy Spirit. The whole language forcibly implies, that as a general rule these gifts were not bestowed except through the intervention of apostles. But it may be further asked, Why were these gifts required? Could they not be real believers in Jesus Christ and partakers of eternal life without "speaking with tongues"? Was not the object of these supernatural powers to lead to faith and confirm it, and were not the miracles performed by Philip himself sufficient for these purposes? Certainly, in all inquiries into the subject of these gifts of the Spirit, we must remember that they are to be expressly distinguished from that gift of the Spirit of Life in Jesus Christ, which is the result of faith in a risen Saviour.* But these superadded gifts are "powers" stimulating and aiding the personal spiritual life, yet mainly necessary for Church life, that is, for the life of the Church as an organic body. And therefore without questioning that the gift of the Spirit in this instance might have been specially necessary, in order to prove to Jewish disciples that the despised Samaritans were members of the same body of Christ, yet the other explanation is quite sufficient and far more to the purpose, namely, that the gifts of the Spirit were required by the Samaritans themselves, that they might enjoy the blessings of the communion of saints.

But now another question follows. Was it the custom of the apostles to lay their hands on disciples after baptism, and did all the disciples thus ordinarily receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost? As yet we have found in the history no instance of the apostles laying their hands on others except on the appointment of the

* See Part II. Chap. XV. (I.)

Seven; and then we observe, that miraculous powers were subsequently exercised by those on whom hands were laid. But more we learn not. Another instance however at a later period of the apostolic history throws some further light on the question. The apostle Paul, we read,* found at Ephesus some disciples, whom he asked whether they received gifts of the Holy Ghost on their conversion.† They answered that they did not even hear such gifts mentioned. St Paul asks, "Into "what then were ye baptised?" For Christian baptism is into "the Name of the Father and of the Son "and of the Holy Spirit," and the teaching of this baptism‡ necessarily includes the promise of the gift of the Spirit. On the other hand the teaching of John himself, whose baptism they had received, expressly pointed to Him who should baptise with the Holy Spirit; and therefore the meaning of their reply must be, not that they had never heard of the existence of the Holy Spirit, but that they did not hear that His gifts were actually bestowed. They were thereupon baptised by Paul into the name of the Lord Jesus, and, when he had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. It is argued by some, that these two instances of the conversion of the Samaritans, and of the baptism of John's disciples were exceptional cases, —although why the latter should be it is difficult to conceive,—and that these instances do not prove that it was the custom of the apostles to lay their hands on the baptised. But we must ask in reply, Why, if the bestowal of spiritual gifts ordinarily followed baptism, was

* Acts, xix. 1-6.

† Εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες; Οἱ δὲ εἶπον, Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιόν ἐστιν ἠκούσαμεν.

‡ Acts, ii. 38.

the rite of imposition of hands necessary as the means in these particular instances? The habit of dealing with cases as exceptional, when Scripture itself does not indicate them to be exceptions, is one of the many impediments which prevent Christians from arriving at any certain and definite conclusions on the most important subjects. Every precedent or instruction will become an exception at the judgment or caprice of the expositor.

We must then conclude that, as an ordinary rule, the apostles laid their hands on those that were baptised, with prayer that they might receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And yet we must not overlook the facts,—first, that the promise of the Holy Spirit is expressly connected with repentance and baptism;* secondly, that there are many proofs, that, as on the day of Pentecost, the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed without apostolic intervention; thirdly, that when the Spirit fell on the Gentiles that believed,† a case which we shall presently consider, the matter for surprise was, not that these gifts appeared without the laying on of apostles hands, but in Gentiles who were not even baptised; and lastly, that there is sufficient evidence‡ to prove that these gifts of power were not so tied to any apostolic rite, as not to be manifestly the result of the free exercise of the personal will of the Holy Ghost.§ Taking all these things into consideration, we may, I think, without hesitation arrive at the following conclusion: that the rite of laying on of hands was not used as a pledge or seal of these spiritual gifts, but as means, together with prayer which is specially mentioned as preceding, for obtaining such powers as

* Cf. Acts, ii. 38.

† Acts, x. 44-48.

‡ See *infra*, Chap XII., On Spiritual Gifts.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

are necessary for the members of Christ's body, the promises of such powers being involved in the promises of baptism, by which men are grafted into that body. Thus it is evident, that the rite of laying on of hands on them that are baptised is an ordinance different in kind from baptism itself, first of all in not being like baptism, "a sure witness and effectual sign of grace;" secondly, in the gifts which are sought through these means being spiritual powers, not necessarily received in proportion to the love and faith of the recipient, for, (as St Paul teaches) all these spiritual gifts may be possessed by a man without charity. It may be added, that the gift of tongues, which seems to have been specially connected with the laying on of hands, was not only the lowest and most largely distributed of all the gifts of the Spirit, but also one which would pass most naturally into those spiritual powers which are conformable to the ordinary course of nature. The emotions of the mind, expressing themselves in fervent language of praise, were, we have seen reason to suppose, the substance of this gift: and it is probable that these would vary much in different persons. It thus differed widely from those miraculous powers which were not subjective; such as the power of healing the sick or raising the dead.

The conclusion that laying on the hands with prayer for spiritual gifts was an apostolic rite, closely related to baptism, which would be continued even as the miraculous element in these gifts passed away, is confirmed by a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews,* in which "laying on of hands" is mentioned in connection with baptism, and the teaching accompanying these rites is described as "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."

* Heb. vi. 1.

Towards the close of the apostolic age, when the Epistle to the Hebrews was probably written, the supernatural, or rather I should say the miraculous, element in the gifts of the Holy Ghost was rapidly disappearing.

Note to Chap. VI. (I.)

Heb. vi. 1, 2. The sense of these words which I have given above seems to me not only the most natural, but the only legitimate, interpretation of the passage. For first, doctrine *respecting* baptisms and the imposition of hands,—in which sense it is generally understood,—would require the preposition περί: the genitive alone must imply that the baptisms and the imposition of hands were *the things taught*, if it refers at all to the subject of the teaching. That is, βαπτισμῶν διδαχήν, if the genitive is the subject, would correspond to βαπτισμοὺς διδάσκομεν, which it is impossible to believe is the meaning of the writer. Again, I cannot think that any apostolic writer would include doctrines concerning baptisms and the imposition of hands in the first principles of the faith, of which he is speaking. The full force and meaning of baptism can hardly be considered as a rudimentary truth, it is rather learnt as the knowledge of the Christian develops itself. Those again who can suppose that the explanation of the typical meaning of Jewish *washings* (as they interpret βαπτισμῶν) was one of the chief subjects of elementary Christian teaching even of Hebrews, as something of the same order as faith toward God and the resurrection, must have strangely-constituted minds. Why washings, and not other far more significant and prominent rites?

I cannot therefore but conclude, that the genitive here expresses not the subject of the teaching, but the rites to which the teaching belongs; and then the meaning of the passage is as follows: "Not laying over again the foundation of repen-" tance and faith,—which is the doctrine belonging to baptisms " and to laying on of hands,—of the resurrection of the dead " and eternal judgment." The only difficulty here is as to the word βαπτισμῶν which is an unusual word for baptism, and the use of which in the plural has to be explained. But this diffi-

culty is removed by considering, that there is no necessary difference of meaning between βαπτισμός and -μα. ("Nouns in "-μος generally and properly express the action itself, but de- "note also the result of the action." "Nouns in -μα also denote "sometimes the result of the action."—Donaldson's Grammar.) Now the technical and idiomatic use of βάπτισμα is always in the singular in the New Testament, nor is the word ever used in any sense in the plural; whereas βαπτισμός is always used in the plural, never in the singular. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that βαπτισμοί is the plural form, of which βάπτισμα is the singular. I understand then the writer to mean, that repentance and faith towards God,—not be it observed faith in Jesus Christ,—are doctrines which belong to all the different baptisms among God's people, whether of proselytes to Judaism, John's baptism, or Christian baptism. I should have thought this would not be questioned: but as I notice that it is doubted by some whether faith was included in John's baptism, I would refer to Acts, xix. 4. There can however be no kind of repentance without faith in God: it will hardly be supposed that John baptised infidels.

It must be remembered however that this interpretation of the passage does but slightly affect the argument as regards "laying on of hands." According to the rendering I adopt, the writer mentions this rite as closely connected with Christian baptism. But, on the other interpretation, the "imposition "of hands" is mentioned as among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

II.—The Ethiopian Eunuch.

It is hardly probable that the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip would have been selected out of thousands of instances of conversion, and recorded so much in detail, unless there had been some new principle involved in it. And yet if the eunuch had been, in the full sense of the word, a proselyte to Judaism, there would have been nothing remarkable in

it, for "Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch," was already one of the Seven. But this man belonged to a class which by the law were excluded from entering the congregation of the Lord,* but whose admission to the privileges of the covenant was expressly foretold by the prophet Isaiah;† and also to a race, the descendants of Ham, whom the Old Testament represented as under a special curse. Although therefore his attendance at the feasts to worship removed him from the class of the unclean Gentiles, yet his conversion and baptism was a sign of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile being gradually broken down, and was thus a precursor of that which followed soon afterwards, the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ.

There are some few points in the history here bearing on our general argument. Such are, 1. That baptism was in this case undoubtedly administered without a long process of preliminary instruction. At the same time it must be observed, that there was a knowledge of the Old Testament, and also unmistakable evidence of deep piety and sincerity. That there must have been some profession of faith we cannot doubt; but the question and answer in the received version‡ are certainly an interpolation.

2. Another point to be observed is that there seem to have been no gifts of the Spirit. Some manuscripts indeed, including the Alexandrine Codex, and several ancient versions, have the reading, "When they came "up out of the water, the Holy Spirit of the Lord fell "upon Philip. But an angel of the Lord caught away "Philip."§ The argument in the preceding section

* Deut. xxiii. 1. † Isa. lvi. 5. ‡ Verse 37.

§ Augustine (Serm. ad. Pop. xcix. 11) had this reading, and argues on it.

would indicate,—as is fully proved by the instances of the conversion of the Gentiles, which we shall examine in the following section,—that the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed without the laying on of the apostles' hands, when there was cause sufficient, and the case of a man going into a distant land among the unconverted might have been a sufficient cause. But it must be remarked on the other hand that, as a proselyte in some sense to Judaism, the eunuch would undoubtedly from time to time go up to Jerusalem to worship.

3. One of the most remarkable features however in this conversion is the proof it affords of the value of Holy Scripture, God's written word, as an instrument for the extension of the Church. It is urged indeed that in this case Scripture by itself was not effectual for the conversion of the eunuch; and Philip's question to him, Understandest thou what thou readest? with his very natural reply, Why, how can I except some one guide me? is sometimes quoted as a proof that Scripture alone is insufficient without the teaching of the Church. And it is indeed a sufficient answer to those who would exalt the written letter to the disparagement of the ministry of the Spirit which Christ Himself has ordained. The Church is, we have seen, not merely a company of those who believe certain truths, but a fellowship of men through whom,—though not exclusively through them,—the Spirit of Jesus Christ works. But it will hardly be argued, that the New Testament, the inspired record of the acts and teaching both of the Lord Himself and of His apostles, does not supply more guidance for the understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures, and for that knowledge which is sufficient for elementary faith, than could have been conveyed by Philip to the eunuch while he sat with

him in the chariot. Those, who would seek an argument for the insufficiency of the Christian Scriptures for the conversion of those who have no other source of instruction, can certainly not find it here.

III.—The Conversion of the Gentiles.

The next chapter in the history of the extension of the Church, and one that opened out the whole world as its field of labour, was the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the communion of the faithful. Even during the persecution, we shall find hereafter, the Gospel was preached to Gentiles at Antioch by some of those who were scattered abroad, but the tidings of this do not appear to have reached Jerusalem until some time after. Besides which, there is nothing to show that the converts there were not at first admitted into the Church through the portals of Judaism; and no doubt, it was the general expectation of the disciples that the Gentiles would be gathered into the kingdom of heaven by first becoming proselytes to the faith of Israel. Meanwhile, an event took place which prepared the Church for the recognition of Gentiles, without any preliminary process, as fellow-heirs with themselves of all the promises of the kingdom. After the persecution had ceased through the conversion of the chief persecutor, Peter visited the Churches, which now were founded throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and which had peace, the historian says, and being built up and advancing in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were increasing. In one town, Joppa, the seaport of Jerusalem, where many believed in the Lord after a remarkable miracle which Peter wrought, the apostle resided for "many days,"

lodging in the house of one Simon a tanner. As the trade of a tanner was considered by Jews as bordering on ceremonial uncleanness, it has been concluded that Peter's own Jewish prejudices were already somewhat removed. But indeed the teaching of his Master was sufficient to prevent him from regarding the traditions which men had added to the law of God; there is no reason to suppose that his adherence to the law itself, which Jesus Himself had observed, was in any way altered. At this time, in Cæsarea,—thirty miles from Joppa,—the residence of the Roman procurator and the headquarters of the Roman army, there was a Roman centurion, a man, like him of whom we read in the Gospels, who, without becoming a proselyte to Judaism, had learnt enough of the living and true God, during his residence in the East, to worship and serve Him in spirit and in truth. The history of his conversion to the Christian faith, preceded by the supernatural visit which directed him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter, and by the vision, which, even as the messengers were drawing near to Joppa, warned Peter henceforward to call nothing common or unclean, need not be repeated here. The reverent homage, paid by Cornelius to one whom he regarded as an ambassador and very representative of Heaven, had been received by Jesus Christ, the Divine King, as His rightful due; but is at once checked by Peter when offered to himself. It was certainly a very significant fact, that, on the first entrance of the Church into the Gentile and Roman world, the new danger that would arise from that religious feeling, in which there is veneration without knowledge,—the characteristic of devout heathenism,—at once manifests itself, and in the form of excessive reverence for an apostle. The address of Peter

that followed was, as on the day of Pentecost, a simple testimony to the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to forgiveness of sins through His name. While Peter is yet speaking, and his hearers are eagerly drinking in these new and divine truths, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and there rises a burst of praise in various languages from these uncircumcised and unbaptised Gentiles. Peter himself, as he afterwards told those who objected to the reception of the Gentiles, was reminded, on witnessing these proofs of the presence of the Spirit, of Christ's own promise: "John indeed baptised with water; but ye shall be "baptised with the Holy Ghost." The greater blessing, the baptism of the Spirit promised to the disciples, was given to the Gentiles. How then could he refuse to recognise them as disciples, or withhold the lesser gift, the baptism of water? He therefore directed that they should be baptised in the name of the Lord, and remained with them at their request some days to give them further instruction in the faith of Christ.

The special reason for the gift of the Holy Ghost, on this occasion, preceding instead of following the means and instruments, by which ordinarily those gifts were bestowed, is sufficiently obvious from the effect produced on the mind of Peter, and of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem. It was the testimony of the Holy Spirit Himself to the truth that the Gentiles, as Gentiles, were to be received into the fellowship and to the blessings of Christ's Church. For it was the express promise of Jesus Christ* that there should be a *twofold* testimony, one by the Spirit Himself, the other by the apostles directed by Him: and the history supplies many instances, which we shall hereafter con-

* John, x. 26, 27; and compare Heb. ii. 3, 4.

sider, of the witness given by the Holy Ghost, not merely through the apostles, but independently of them. Even apostles could not be perfect representatives of His mind in revealing the whole truth of Christ, or be channels large enough for all His gifts. Moreover if the Church had not been taught by some such instances as these, that the free gifts of God were not necessarily bound to the means ordained, it would have been thought that they were bestowed according to the will of man, and not by the will of the Spirit Himself, and the order of the Church would have been regarded as the laws of the natural world, as a chain of necessary causes and effects. The independent action of the Spirit was a protest against those strong naturalistic tendencies of the human mind, which the immense powers, at that time visible in the organic action of the Church, might otherwise have made irresistible. In fact, the case of Simon, at the time of the conversion of the Samaritans, was a proof that these apostolic powers were so regarded by unspiritual minds. He thought to purchase with money "the *free gift* of God." *

It must be further observed that this independent action of the Spirit will be found, *chiefly if not exclusively*, in the extension of the Church among the Gentiles. For amongst them the Church was not the outgrowth of a previous divine economy, but had to be in great measure independent of all past revelations of God, and therefore it the more needed the direct testimony of the Spirit. But wherever, and howsoever, the Spirit thus witnessed, we must remember that these were no true exceptions to the apostolic order of the Church; they were always brought into consistency

* Τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνόμισας διὰ χρημάτων κτᾶσθαι.

with it, and ultimately, we shall find, were merged into it, when the principles and true force of that order had been fully exhibited. And we must notice on the present occasion, that this conversion of the Gentiles, whilst it supplies a corrective to the naturalism common to all ages, at the same time affords the strongest possible testimony to the general necessity of Christ's ordinances, and therefore to the constitution of His Church as a visible body on earth. If Christianity had been nothing more than a system of revealed truth, through which spiritual life was to be awakened in those who should receive it, and not a real kingdom with its due form and order, why did the apostle direct that the Gentiles, having received the Holy Ghost, should be baptised? Are not many disposed to ask, What need for any outward and visible sign when the inward and spiritual grace has been received? When the Spirit himself has borne witness, what is the value of a mere ceremony? The apostle Peter, having learnt from Christ and His Spirit, argued differently.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH.

THE account of the conversion of the Roman centurion was evidently intended by St Luke to be an introduction to the history of the first Church among the Gentiles in that great city of Antioch, which became afterwards the centre of the missions by which the Roman world was evangelised. The word of life was first carried to Antioch not by apostles, possibly not by those who had the office of teachers; in the natural world seed may be borne to distant places by the very winds of heaven, and yet the office of the sower is not unnecessary. We find that some of those who were scattered abroad during the persecution after Stephen's death, visited Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and at last Antioch, the capital of all Syria. At first they spoke the word of life only to Jews, but at last some of them, men of Cyprus, and of Cyrene,—one of whom, "Lucius the Cyrenian," is subsequently mentioned as a prophet and teacher,—on arriving at Antioch preached Christ to the Greeks there. That these and not Hellenising Jews were intended by the historian is certain by their being contrasted with Jews. This work, then new,—for it preceded the conversion of Cornelius,—was much blessed by God, and a "great "number," evidently of the Greeks to whom the Gos-

pel was preached, "believed and turned to the Lord." The tidings of this result of the preaching of the Gospel reached the Church at Jerusalem, but probably not until some time afterwards; for, when Barnabas was sent to Antioch, Saul had not only been converted, but returned to Tarsus from that visit to Jerusalem which he mentions in the Epistle to the Galatians, as having been three years after his conversion. We are apt to forget, in this concise and condensed history of the Church, that the events of several years are often contained in a single verse, or even a single phrase. The mission of Barnabas to Antioch is described by the historian as if it were to some distant region, and the language implies that he was directed to visit the various places where the Gospel had been preached by the evangelists who were now at Antioch.* The object of the mission was evidently to strengthen the hands of these labourers and establish their work. Barnabas, on arriving at Antioch, rejoiced to see such notable proofs of the grace of God, confirming all the hopes that had been awakened by the conversion of the Roman centurion, and his earnest appeals and generous piety greatly strengthened the infant Church and increased its numbers. That Barnabas was not at this time possessed of apostolic powers, we must conclude from the fact that they were committed to him afterwards; but it is hardly to be supposed that the gifts of the Spirit were wanting in this Church; and it is therefore probable that in this case again, as in the first conversion of the Gentiles, they were bestowed without apostolic intervention. Finding the work so large, Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul, whom he already knew as chosen by Jesus Christ for the special

* Ἐξαπέστειλαν Βαρνάβαν διελθεῖν ἕως Ἀντιοχείας.

work of evangelising the Gentiles, and he brought him to Antioch, where they continued for a whole year labouring in this field which the Lord had blessed.

There are several indications, in the language by which the historian describes this period, of a new phase of Church life beginning at Antioch, as indeed might have been anticipated. At Jerusalem, we have seen, the public service of the Church was at first chiefly in the Temple, the Jewish hours of prayer being observed, and the breaking of bread in their private houses, with special prayers, being the only distinctive act of exclusively Christian worship. Gradually, as the hostility of the unbelieving Jews increased and the line of demarcation between them and the disciples widened, the Jewish element of worship would diminish, and that which was purely Christian would be enlarged. The circumstances attending the ordination of the Seven indicate large assemblies, and the united Christian worship of many. But there is no reason to suppose that any Christian service took the place of the Temple worship at Jerusalem. The Christian assemblies of Jews both at Jerusalem and elsewhere would hold somewhat the same relation to the Temple and its services, as the synagogues of the unbelieving Jews held, such for example as the synagogues of foreign Jews at Jerusalem itself.* And in fact, St James in writing to Jewish Christians expressly calls their public assemblies synagogues.† In a Church gathered from Gentiles however the case would be different. All their worship from the first must have been purely Christian, and we should expect therefore to find here the most marked development of that divine service of the Church which would ultimately displace the whole

* See Acts, vi. 9. † James, ii. 2.

ritual of Judaism. The teaching of Christ had already affirmed the principles out of which its service would be evolved. He had taught His disciples that wherever two or three are gathered into His name, there He is in the midst of them; united prayer has special promises with reference particularly, as we have seen,* to all Church action. The Father must now be worshipped not at Jerusalem only, but in every place, and therefore Christian worship at Antioch is as real and valid and effectual, as the Temple service itself. Above all, Jesus Christ had instituted the Christian passover, continually to show forth His death and be the formal act of communion of all disciples both with Him and with each other. Such were the elements which would eventually, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, be clothed in those forms which should best express their spirit, and be suitable for the spiritual wants of men, and adapted to men's different conditions and circumstances. There are no laws of divine service in the new economy, to be servilely followed in the letter: in this respect as in others, the spirit will unfold the form in which it is most suitably and effectively embodied.

I would observe further, before we examine the language of the historian, that there are two opposite errors to be avoided by those, who desire to arrive at true conclusions from the records of the apostolic age, and not merely to affix to these records interpretations which may be convenient as against opponents in controversy. The one is the error of those, who fill up the outline given by the sacred writer, with the aid of their own imaginations, by those practices and usages of later times which they believe to be the most

* Part II. Chap. V. p. 116.

Christian, and assume to have been apostolical. In reading some comments on the apostolic history, one is at times reminded of those medieval paintings, in which primitive saints and New Testament scenes are represented with the costumes, architecture, decorations, with which the artist himself was familiar. The opposite error however is more common amongst us in the present day, and is equally fatal to truth; I mean the error of imagining that because, in a brief historical sketch, details are omitted, therefore they did not exist.

As regards the details of Christian worship in apostolic times, there can be no doubt that the principles of united worship, which the disciples received from Jesus Christ, would be developed under two influences,—on the one hand by the Spirit's teaching enabling them to enter into the spirit of the new dispensation; on the other hand, and very largely, by the religious habits in which the first disciples had been trained, and in which their Divine Master had lived with them during His earthly ministry. Even the exclusively Christian worship would necessarily have, from the first, somewhat of an Old Testament form, for there were no other types of divine service, except the Lord's Prayer: nor could it have been otherwise, even in a Church of Gentile converts, receiving the Gospel as they did through Jewish teachers. And although the relation to the Gospel of the Temple worship with its typical ceremonial was but gradually expounded to the minds of Christians, and this ritual would be but slowly translated into the spiritual language of the new covenant, the simple services of the synagogue would be so readily adapted to Christian worship, they would offer to Jewish converts so natural a type for their own, that

we cannot doubt that the earliest Christian services would take that form, the Christian elements of worship being the foundation of them. And there is much historically to confirm this view. The titles of office-bearers in the Church have been shown to correspond with those in the synagogue. The fact also which has been already noticed, that St James of Jerusalem calls Christian assemblies synagogues, sufficiently indicates the general similarity of the services. There was however one remarkable difference, besides the distinctive Christian ordinances and the Christian teaching, and this became more marked, to judge from St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, as the Church was extending itself among the Gentiles; I mean, the testimony given to the supernatural presence of the Holy Ghost in these assemblies by the spiritual gifts exercised therein, which were at times so abundant as to require distinct directions to prevent disorder.

The historian, in speaking of the assemblies at Antioch at this period, indicates a new phase of Church life by a new use of the word *Church*. Hitherto it has been used for the whole body of disciples, either through the world, or in a particular place; it is now for the first time employed, as "synagogue" was before it amongst the Jews, either for the assembly of worshippers, or the place in which the assembly was held. "It came to "pass," he says, "that for a whole year Barnabas and "Saul assembled in the Church,* and taught a consider- "able multitude." The Church in Antioch was not a Jewish sect, joining in the general worship of their fellow-countrymen, with a few separate practices of their own. They stand out now as a distinct people, with religious assemblies and divine service and places

* συνελθῆναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ.

of worship of their own. Another sign of this is, that now the glorious name is given them, by which they are to be designated in all future history. Amongst themselves they have been known as yet, as "disciples," "the brethren," "the way:" amongst unbelieving Jews, as "Galilæans," or "the sect of the Nazarenes;" now in the Roman and Greek world, they receive their proper title which their countrymen never would have given them, "Christians," the followers of the Christ. Antioch becomes, in a certain sense, the birthplace of Christendom as distinguished from Judaism.

And yet, we shall find, this new development, far from being any division or separation from the original body, was united with it by the most intimate bonds, and was subordinate to it. It affords no confirmation of the theory, that the different phases of Church life would be independent of each other, separate disunited forms, growing side by side like the varied types of nature, having only the feeble common bond of one origin, if indeed they have this. The fact of the subordination will appear hereafter, the signs of the unity between Jew and Gentile are apparent from the first. The Christians at Antioch itself, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, are not two Churches but one. Their unity with the mother Church in Jerusalem was soon brought to some practical tests, one of which is here recorded. During this period of new Church life, certain prophets came *down* to Antioch,—*down*, because Jerusalem is as yet the religious metropolis although Antioch is the political capital. This is the first occasion on which prophets are mentioned in the history. These prophets, as we gather from St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, would undoubtedly exercise their spiritual gifts in the public assembly of the

Church, for the instruction and edification of the Christians. One of them, Agabus, rising up in the congregation, foretells a great and general famine that was to come upon the world. This prediction of a trial which would press far more heavily on the poorer brethren in Judæa, than on the Christians at Antioch, called forth action, in principle the same as that which the first impulse of spiritual life produced at Jerusalem, though it assumed a different form. The principle that was expressed in the voluntary community of goods among the first disciples at Jerusalem was, we have seen, that in Christ, and the fellowship of His Church, there is the unity of a real brotherhood, and that the interests of the body are the interests of every member. And, whilst the community of goods was merely an accident of the first condition of the infant Church, the great principle which it embodied was inwrought into the very life of the Church, as it extended itself throughout the Roman world, by the action of the same cause, namely, by the wants of one part demanding a supply from another part. Not only were Gentile Christians called to prove their love one to another by ministering to the necessities of their own poor, and occasionally to those of apostles and others who preached the Gospel, but the poverty of the mother Church in Jerusalem remained, at all events during most of the apostolic period, as a standing claim on the charities of Christians scattered through the Roman empire. One cannot but regard it as so ordered, for the express purpose that the free circulation of brotherly love might be quickened, and the true unity of Jew and Gentile might be both confirmed and manifested. Thus whilst the unity of the Church had its instruments and seals, in one faith, one baptism, one Head, one body; all with one mind

and one mouth glorifying the same Lord; it had also its evidences, apparent to all men, in the interchange of brotherly aid. And the principle thus became so interwoven into the system of the Church, that these contributions soon formed an integral part of its service. Thus when there was the division of labour among the apostolic body, which will be subsequently described, the condition imposed on those who went to the Gentiles was that they should "remember the poor," that is, evidently the poor brethren at Jerusalem, "the very "thing," St Paul adds, "which I was forward to do," as indeed his epistles prove. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians he gives directions to them, such as he had given to other Churches, as to the manner of such collections; that they should not be by some sudden impulses and special efforts to which they might be roused by his earnest appeals when he should visit them; but by forming the habit of laying by, week by week, on each Lord's Day, according as God had prospered each. This cannot indeed fairly be used, as if it were a command to have weekly collections in the Church, because the apostle directs each man to lay up his store at home.* Yet undoubtedly it is sufficient proof of the advantage of such collections, and of the habit of giving not spasmodically, so to speak, but continually, little by little, according to a man's ability, and that on the Lord's Day, as an offering of thankfulness and love for a risen Saviour, and not from inferior motives. It is probable indeed that in the early Christian Churches there would be, as in the Jewish synagogues† and in the Temple itself, alms-boxes, in which

* παρ' ἑαυτῷ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων.

† In the synagogues there were two, one for "the poor of Jerusalem," the other for local charities.

voluntary contributions would be placed, as "God's "offerings."* But however the collection was made at Antioch, the historian relates that the Christians there agreed to send, each as he had the means, relief to their brethren in Judæa. Barnabas and Saul were intrusted with the charge of these contributions, which were to be given to the presbyters of the Church in those parts.

On the return of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch, events of even greater import in the history of the Church there soon followed. There are however some points of consequence to be noticed before we examine this history. It must be observed that as yet we have not heard of any of the apostles visiting Antioch; at all events it is evident that no apostle resided there. The Church in Antioch was, in some respects, in a far more rudimentary form than the Church in Jerusalem. There were there only some who are called "prophets "and teachers;" of whom five are mentioned, Barnabas being named first, and Saul,—his apostolic powers being yet latent,—the last. We can hardly suppose that Saul, to whom, as we learn from his own writings, Jesus Christ had largely revealed His truths, and who had preached Christ in Jerusalem and elsewhere, would not be classed as a prophet; so that we must understand "prophets and teachers" as the general appellation of all; the latter term describing their functions, the former that they were divinely inspired. In a subsequent chapter we shall examine carefully the relation of the various spiritual gifts of the apostolic age to the order of the Church; but meanwhile it will be necessary here to consider some points as to the office of the prophets who, from this time of the extension of the

* Compare Luke, xxi. 4. "τὰ δῶρα τοῦ Θεοῦ."

Church among the Gentiles, frequently appear in the history, until, as the organisation of the Church develops itself, they, with the other extraordinary gifts, gradually disappear. They are frequently mentioned by St Paul with apostles, and always as second to them, and to them alone, in the Church of Christ. The gift bestowed on them St Paul describes as the most excellent, and most profitable, of all spiritual gifts. For the prophet is not merely one who predicts future events, but one who has immediate communion with Him in Whom are all things, past present and future, and possesses both a spiritual insight into divine truth, and the power of expounding this truth in the language of the children of men. These prophets were, in fact, like those by whom the Spirit spake of old, with this immense additional advantage, that they knew through apostolic testimony the history of God made flesh and dwelling among us. Their office was an instance, in many cases undoubtedly, of that independent action of the Spirit which we have already noticed; although it appears that, in some cases at least, "prophesying" followed the laying on of the hands of an apostle,* and the subordination of prophets to the apostolic office is very distinctly marked. Not only is the rule, "first apostles, secondarily prophets," but also, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or "spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I "write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." The apostolic office is the test of the prophetical, so that, although a prophet should work no miracles in attestation of his claim to speak under divine inspiration, yet the recognition of him by those of apostolic authority was the seal of his mission as a prophet of the Lord.

* Acts, xi. 16.

Thus Barnabas received that name from the apostles, as being "a son of exhortation," * his name in the original meaning "a son of prophecy," and implying that he was recognised by the apostles as having the gift of prophecy. The prophets therefore, although instances of the direct action of the Holy Ghost, were at the same time examples of the unity of the body by the consistency of their functions with those committed to the apostles, and by their subordination to them.

I have already called attention to the fact that this direct action of the Holy Spirit is most conspicuous as the Church began to extend itself among the Gentiles. Antioch was a signal example of this, in the Church there being at first committed to prophets, instead of apostles: it is now to afford a yet more illustrious instance, by the apostolical office itself being there extended through the same action. A yet more remarkable and convincing proof is to be given, that the direct testimony of the Spirit, whilst perfectly in unison with that supplied through the apostles, was both independent and in all respects equal in authority.

At the time to which the history now refers, it is related that these prophets at Antioch were "minister-" ing to the Lord and fasting." The addition of fasting here evidently implies some special object, and the nature of that object is proved by the response given by it by the Spirit of Christ. † The word used for the ministrations (λειτουργούντων), from which the ecclesiastical term liturgy is derived, here for the first time describes the functions of ministers of the Christian Church. It is elsewhere used both of the priestly service under the law, to which the Christian ministry

* υἱὸς παρακλήσεως.

† Cf. xiii. 2. Ἀφορίσατε δή μοι. "Separate me *then*."

was now succeeding, and also of all service for the benefit of others. To explain it, as Chrysostom does in his Homily on this portion of the Acts, of "preaching," is certainly to limit its meaning, and the union of fasting with it clearly indicates prayer; to interpret it as "offering sacrifice" is to substitute one part of the functions of the priest under the law for the whole ministry of the Gospel, and to assume that sacrifice is the service of both. We must certainly understand the word here of the whole of divine service in the Church, the Supper of the Lord no doubt being the centre of such service, and teaching and preaching an important part, but the prominent idea here, as the word fasting proves, being that of prayer. And that the special object of such prayer was the extension of the Church of Christ on earth, can hardly be doubted. The Gospel had come to Antioch, why not to the rest of the world? What hindered that it should go forth to conquer all nations according to the word of Christ? Such feelings and desires would be stimulated by the knowledge of the Lord's own words to Saul at the time of his conversion. And it may be asked, what reason was there that it should not at once go forth from Antioch? What need for delay, or for any further instructions? Is not the very desire, with the knowledge of the Gospel and the spiritual gifts possessed by prophets and teachers, sufficient warrant for undertaking such a work without any special commission? Those who would ask such questions, however, can never have realised the meaning of those words of St Paul at a later period of his life,—"How shall they preach except they be sent." It is evident, as we shall see more distinctly when we examine the history of Paul himself, that, even at this time, he did not consider himself to have the full powers

and authority necessary for the work of bearing the Gospel to the heathen. But we must not suppose that the time which was spent in preparing the way of the Lord was lost: there is no real gain, in prophets and teachers (to use the language of the Old Testament) running when God does not send them. At last the commission comes in the form of an express direction and from the Holy Ghost. It is not a mere revelation of what may be good and expedient in such a case; a spiritual instinct quickened to recognise the course of duty; it is a definite, specific, and (so to speak) personal command; the command of the Holy Ghost, one God with the Father and the Son. "Separate for me then "Barnabas and Saul unto the work for which I have "been calling them."

The intimations which Saul had received from the time of his conversion, that it was the will of Christ that he should preach the Gospel to Jew and Gentile, are no doubt included in the "call" to which these words refer. Barnabas may have received some intimations of a similar nature. But the use of the perfect tense,* expressing the state consequent on such intimations, points especially to the consciousness of Barnabas and Saul themselves, to their desires to be engaged in this work, or, as we should express it, to the inward *call* of the Spirit. The conviction had probably of late been growing in their own minds that they were bound to go forth and preach Christ to the world. And why should they not? Because, even as the apostles, after they had received Christ's command to go and teach all nations, yet waited until they should receive power from on high before their work actually began, and should be by the outpouring of the Spirit

* προσκέκλημαι.

consecrated for their work,—so Barnabas and Saul waited for that, which, in the action of the Church, corresponds to this outpouring, namely, a formal separation and consecration for the work under the authority of Him who is the divine Guide of the Church. The other three prophets are now therefore appointed to be the instruments, acting under the express commission of the Holy Ghost, for effecting this. Human agency is to be employed, although the Spirit Himself calls, for setting apart the chosen vessels. After fasting and prayer, they lay their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and let them depart.* So they, having been sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed. Man is the instrument for the separation; the Holy Ghost first calls, and then sends.

If this act of this mission of Barnabas and Saul from the Church in Antioch be regarded merely as a rule or precedent in Church action, it presents difficulties and exceptional circumstances, which must prevent it from fitting in to any conceivable theory of Church organisation. But if the principles involved in it be considered, it is a most pregnant instance, full of instruction as to the true organisation of Christ's Church. It is difficult to imagine a stronger proof,—first, that no spiritual qualifications, desires, impulses, or circumstances, pointing ever so distinctly in one direction,—whatever in fact may be included in an inward call or vocation,—are of themselves sufficient for a true mission in the Church of God. Secondly, that to the complete appointment to an office or mission the interposition of men having authority for the purpose is necessary in the Church. Thirdly, that this act, being performed

* ἀπέλυσαν not ἐξαπέστειλαν as might be supposed from the English version.

by those who have authority, is not a mere form or ceremony, suited to impress the mind with a sense of the responsibility of the work, or useful as a testimony to the fact of such a person being called of the Spirit, or expedient for other purposes, but it is an actual separation of the man for the Holy Ghost, a consecration more real than any of holy vessels, places, or persons, under the law, for then "the Spirit was not given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Lastly, that a mission thus received is a real mission by the Holy Ghost. What this mission was, and what the office was which was required for the mission, we shall consider when we examine the history of Saul who is also called Paul.

It may be well, however, here very briefly to review the evidence supplied thus far as to the process through which office in the Church,—which Jesus Christ's own teaching marks out as a substantive reality, not created by the fulfilment of duties, but creating responsibilities and entitling to powers,—is bestowed and committed to those who receive it. There are several steps in the process, which become apparent on a simple comparison of the several instances given in the New Testament. The Twelve were chosen by Jesus Himself, and appointed by Him. He educates them in the duties of their office, gives them His final charge and instructions, and finally the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. In this first appointment, all is direct and immediate; there is no human agency, except that of Christ Himself; but several distinct steps are none the less apparent. Again, Matthias is one of the two selected by the voice of the whole Church to fill the vacant place of the traitor, and he is chosen of the two, in answer to prayer, by a method

recognised and accepted by the Church as the judgment of God; and, lastly, as being one of the Twelve, he receives in common with the rest the full power from on high on the day of Pentecost. Again, the Seven, who are to receive some share of the apostolic ministry, are chosen by the whole Church, and by them presented to the apostles, who appoint them, and, by the laying on of their hands, separate and consecrate them for their work, in which the presence of the Holy Ghost with them at once manifests itself. Finally, Barnabas and Saul, though inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to undertake a work, and though the judgment of the Church would certainly point to them as suited for it, yet cannot receive their mission from prophets,—who could not of themselves commit to others their own office, much less one which they themselves held not,—without express authority from the Holy Ghost. In this case the prophets do not by the laying on of hands commit to Barnabas and Saul any of their own functions, as Moses did to Joshua and the apostles did to the Seven, but they set them apart for a work to which they themselves were not commissioned, as being instruments and agents for the Spirit Himself. The *appointment* is entirely the act of the Spirit. The distinctions between the several cases are as instructive indications of the general laws of such appointments, as are the resemblances.

We have here also (as I have before observed) an example, indeed the most remarkable in all the New Testament history, of the action of the Holy Spirit, not through the apostles, but co-ordinately with their action. For here the Holy Spirit not only witnesses by spiritual gifts, but appoints men to a work and office, which as we shall find is in all respects co-ordinate

with that of the Twelve. The Holy Ghost being truly God, His authority is as really divine as that of Jesus Christ Himself. And being the Spirit of Christ, His acts are the acts of Jesus Christ. The mission of Barnabas and Saul therefore was as really a mission by Christ, as the mission of the Twelve. And this truth sufficiently shows that the act was not one of division but of unity; as was indeed conclusively proved when these new apostles went up to Jerusalem and conferred with those who were apostles before them. There was no confusion of order in this act, nothing contradictory to that which had been already established in the church in Jerusalem; it was an extension of the same order for a special purpose by a special interposition. The full meaning of it in regard to the apostle Paul we shall consider in the following chapter. That Barnabas is united with him in this mission, is also full of meaning. He was the appointed representative in Antioch of the Jerusalem Church; the link between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, and at the same time the leader of this new Church life. It was, so to speak, an occasion worthy of the interposition of the Spirit by a specific and definite command, when the first mission to the Gentile world was to be sent forth, and men peculiarly qualified for that special work were to be selected and commissioned.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE APOSTLE PAUL.

THE history of the selection, calling, and appointment of Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, to be an apostle of Jesus Christ with the same powers as the original Twelve, is of the utmost significance and weight in this argument of the gradual development of the Church. No portion of the apostolic history has been more fully discussed by theologians; and yet, I think, the meaning of this new event in the Church's life is apt to be obscured by the very grandeur of the subsequent career of this great apostle, which presents such unmistakable evidence of his spiritual powers and authority, that we fail to observe how his apostleship was related to the original constitution of the Church, and was engrafted on the permanent order which Christ had promised to bless with His presence even to the end of the world.

I have already pointed out, in considering the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, that He formed during His own lifetime, the *type* of the constitution of His Church as an organised body. He appointed Twelve apostles, no more and no less; and the typical number was completed by the disciples, after the fall and death of the traitor, before the Holy Ghost was given. Now these Twelve had one peculiarity in their functions which none could share with them, and to which none

could succeed after them. They had been eyewitnesses, and could give that testimony, which personal intercourse and the observation of human life alone qualify men to give, to the reality of the great facts of Redemption: and further they had been taught and trained by Jesus Christ Himself, learning from His lips and through His works the mysteries of His kingdom, and receiving from Him the promise that the Spirit of truth would bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them. They had therefore qualifications which very few even of the original body of disciples could ever share with them, and a specialty in their office corresponding to these qualifications. All who should hereafter succeed to their ministry, in however large a measure, must testify of these things at second-hand. None would be able to say, as St John said at the beginning of his first epistle, "That "which we have heard, which we have seen with our "eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands "have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto "you." And it must be remembered that the Gospel of Christ being human as well as divine, not a mere theology but a historical faith, His kingdom also being a real human society, this human element of the testimony of the Twelve was essential to the establishment of that kingdom. The special prerogative of the Twelve then was that of being the body through whom, as original witnesses and primary sources, the Revelation of Jesus Christ was to be manifested to the world. Others, like James the Lord's brother, might be apostles in the sense of being fully commissioned by Jesus Christ to feed and govern the flock, and for the exercise of these functions they might be intrusted with plenary apostolic powers, but from these the Twelve

stand out by themselves,—first, as eyewitnesses of the Word of Life,—secondly, as having learned from Jesus Himself the truths of His kingdom,—thirdly, as having been appointed by the Lord, who formed them into a body complete and compact in itself.

And it may be asked, if it were necessary that the Twelve should be thus selected, trained, commissioned, by Jesus Christ, if it were one of the chief purposes of His ministry on earth to lay these twelve foundation-stones of the New Jerusalem, how is it possible that any other should be an apostle, as St Paul however seems to claim to be, in all respects as they were? The answer must be that no one could fulfil precisely the same functions as the original Twelve, and that the apostleship of Paul, although, as we shall find, of equal and independent authority, and in no sense subordinate, yet was co-ordinate and supplementary rather than identical. The apostleship of St Paul holds the same relation to that of the Twelve, as the teaching of the Holy Spirit the Comforter holds to that of Jesus Himself. The training and experience of the Twelve were necessary for the establishment, and the full manifestation, of the historical elements of the faith; but for the development, out of those historical elements, of that complete system of truth by which, as Christ promised, the Spirit should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, other training and other experience would be required. For this end another apostle was added, who not only exercised ordinary apostolic functions, but who was in nothing inferior to the chiefest of the apostles, and learnt nothing from them, but was himself a primary source of the Gospel of Christ. St Paul himself, repeatedly and expressly in his writings, marks out these as the distinctive

peculiarities of his own apostleship. First, he was chosen, called, and appointed, by Jesus Christ Himself, as truly as the Twelve themselves were. Like them, he was an apostle, not by human authority or human agency, but by the immediate authority of Christ. Secondly, he received, not through the instruction of others, but by revelation from Jesus Christ, the knowledge of the historical elements of the faith. Thirdly, by the teaching of the same Spirit as was given to the Twelve, he was guided into the whole truth, and into a fuller and more profound knowledge of those spiritual principles of the Gospel,—of which the historical facts are the exponents and the proofs,—than was at first granted to the Twelve themselves.* And these principles, which concern the relations between the God of the spirits of all flesh and man as a spiritual and responsible being, were specially needed for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, with whom the preliminary teaching of the Old Testament had not the authority that it had with Jews, and with whom the arguments from the adaptation of the Gospel to man's spiritual life would have greater weight. Thus St Paul's apostleship was distinguished from that of others besides the Twelve, in his testimony being primary and not secondary: it differed from that of the Twelve chiefly in the method through which he attained the knowledge of that to which he bore witness.

It is unnecessary here to enlarge upon the previous training through which Saul of Tarsus passed, in preparation for the special work in God's Church which he was hereafter to fulfil. It is sufficient to observe, that being at the same time a Hebrew of the purest Hebrew descent, and yet a Roman citizen; having

* Compare 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16; and Gal. ii.

received a liberal Greek education in a city, reputed to excel both Athens and Alexandria in its schools of philosophy, and also having been distinguished above all his contemporaries for that Rabbinical learning which he was taught in the school of Gamaliel; a man of extraordinary natural powers, but a bigoted zealot as regards the traditions of the Jews; of unblemished moral character and yet a relentless persecutor of the Church of God;—Saul passed through conditions of mind, became familiar with modes of human thought, and was capable of understanding and sympathising with certain phases of human life, which were strange and unintelligible to the Twelve, fishermen of Galilee, unlearned and ignorant men. As it was necessary for the blessed Saviour Himself to be tempted in all points like as we are, in order that through experience He might be qualified to feel with us as Man in all our infirmities: so in His Church, His body, it was necessary for the complete revelation of Christ to the whole race of mankind, that he, through whom the Holy Spirit should reveal the truth of Christ in its fulness, should have the large capacities, natural and acquired, and the large sympathies taught by experience, which so singularly qualified Paul both for communicating the truth, and for apprehending all its adaptations to human thought and life. This revelation was not to be made by men learning the facts from the teaching of the Twelve, and then expounding and applying these for themselves, according to the measure of experience of human life each might possess: for in that case, the superstructure of the faith would not have equal divine authority with the foundation. But it is given, first of all, by one specially and beyond all other men qualified for the purpose, and at the same

time commissioned and empowered, equally with the Twelve, and independently of them, for the apostolic office, that so that the whole gospel from its foundation to its topstone, might be both really human and truly divine.

But was this apostolic office of St Paul at once from the first realised by himself in its full significance, as we now understand it, or was it gradually recognised both by himself and by others? Are the same or similar steps apparent in the process of his appointment to the apostolate as we trace elsewhere? In the apostleship of the Twelve we found, that, though chosen and to a certain extent commissioned as apostles from the first, they gradually rose through long and careful training to the full knowledge and the full possession of their high office, not indeed till the day of Pentecost being endued with the powers enabling them to fulfil its duties. Was there a corresponding process in the case of St Paul, or are we to suppose that from the first he was a fully developed apostle? The history, and St Paul's own explanations, which are very exact and full on this subject, prove beyond doubt that the former is the true statement of the case: that, notwithstanding the extraordinary and exceptional nature of his apostleship, there was nothing eccentric or out of due order, but, as indicated by several very significant circumstances, it was an integral part of the organisation of the Christian society, and was governed by the same fundamental laws.

From the various accounts which are given of the conversion of Saul we learn that, from the time of the first revelation to him of Jesus Christ, it was declared both to himself and to others respecting him that he was chosen to be a minister and witness of the truth of

Christ both to Israel and the Gentiles, "to whom," the Lord said, "I now send thee." Yet although there was this election and mission of Saul by Jesus Christ Himself to a work in His Church, yet first of all he was directed to be baptised and wash away his sins calling upon the name of the Lord. This new phenomenon in the history, of a chosen vessel being called by Christ Himself without the agency of man, was not in any way to derange the appointed order of the Church. He is grafted into the one body as others are. In this new development, indeed, the Jewish elements adhering to the original form of the Church's life are to pass away as being merely temporary accidents, out of which it grows, shaking them off as dead branches, as it enters into new forms and combinations. But those parts of the organisation that are truly Christian become even more distinct as the old pass away.

After his conversion, Saul at once preached Christ in the synagogues, that He was the Messiah of whom the Scriptures spake, and that He is the Son of God. "I "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," he says of himself. But he had much yet to learn. For some time subsequently he was in retirement in Arabia, and if, as his words to the Galatians seem to imply, he was there the chief part of three years, the interval, during which he was being prepared for his future work, was nearly the same as the period of the training of the Twelve through personal intercourse with Jesus Christ. Afterwards he went up to Jerusalem, where Barnabas, who as a Jew of Cyprus may have been personally acquainted with Saul before his conversion, introduced him to the only two apostles then residing in the holy city, Peter, and James the Lord's brother, the apostle of the Church there. During this visit, when praying in the Temple,

he was warned by Jesus Christ that the Jews would not receive his testimony, and again he is told, "I will "send thee far off to the Gentiles." From Jerusalem he returned by Cæsarea to Tarsus, remaining there until he was taken by Barnabas to Antioch. In that city he laboured with Barnabas a whole year, again visited Jerusalem, and on his return we find Saul ministering in the Church, still with no apostolic powers or authority, but only as one of certain prophets and preachers, amongst whom he is named the last. It is indeed impossible not to believe, that some of the singular endowments, which afterwards distinguished him, would not manifest themselves in a measure during this period of his life, or that men, capable of appreciating these, would not discern in this comparatively new convert signs of his future greatness. But to suppose that at this time he either was recognised as an apostle, or was an apostle in the full sense of the word, would be to substitute our own imagination for the facts of the history.

And now follows the remarkable event, which we considered at the close of the preceding chapter, the formal consecration of Barnabas and Saul under the authority of the Holy Ghost to the work to which He had been calling them: Saul, it will be observed, in this revelation from heaven being not only classed with Barnabas but placed after him. But what was the office for which these two men were thus solemnly separated? The history, and the writings of St Paul, leave no doubt whatever as to this question. In the account of their first missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul, who before were prophets, are twice called apostles, nor are they ever afterwards distinguished by any other title. Now to argue that both are called

apostles, because one was, or that Paul was an apostle in the true sense of the word, and Barnabas only a quasi-apostle, when they are both said to have been "sent forth by the Holy Ghost," is a method of dealing with Holy Scripture which cannot lead to any satisfactory conclusions. St Paul indeed, in the account which he gives in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians of his visit to Jerusalem after this missionary journey, expressly unites Barnabas with himself as a partaker of the same office and ministry, and says that the apostles there, James, Peter, and John, recognised them both as their fellow-labourers, giving to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, "that we," he says, "should go to the Gentiles, and "they to the circumcision." And in writing afterwards to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ix. 5, 6), he again classes Barnabas with himself, in comparing their work and responsibilities with those of other apostles. This of course does not mean that Barnabas had, co-ordinately with the Twelve or with St Paul himself, the specialty in his apostolic office which belonged to them of being a primary source of independent testimony to the truths of Christ. But the permanent functions of the office are the same in all who hold it. What is meant is without doubt, that Barnabas was made, under the authority of the Spirit of Christ, one of those of whom St Paul says to the Corinthians, "God hath set some "in the Church, first apostles." And when Christ ascended on high and bestowed spiritual gifts to men, He gave, first of all, some to be apostles. And if we ask what were the functions of this apostolic office which Barnabas and Paul exercised in common, the history supplies a very distinct answer. It explains to us, that these two went about from city to city and

country to country, not only preaching the Gospel, working miracles, making disciples and baptising them, but founding and organising Churches, ordaining presbyters in every city, and doing by their own apostolic authority all things necessary for the establishment and extension of the kingdom of Christ, not needing that their work should be supplemented, as the work of Philip at Samaria was, by any action of those who were apostles before them. That Paul, having the more abundant spiritual gifts and natural powers, would soon almost of necessity take the lead is probable: and yet the incidents at Lystra, where the people would have worshipped them as gods, show that Barnabas, whom they called by the name of the superior divinity, appeared to them greater than Paul, although the latter was the chief speaker. At all events there is nothing in the history to indicate, that Paul held any other office and ministry than that which Barnabas shared with him. When at last they separated, although the labours of Paul are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and his powers and his work mark him as the very mightiest of the glorious company of apostles, and whilst the labours of Barnabas are only casually referred to in the passage from St Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians already quoted, yet we must not suppose that the office, to which the Holy Ghost called and appointed Barnabas together with Paul, remained unfulfilled by him.

We must then, it seems, draw from the history of St Paul's life thus far the following conclusions as to the apostolic office with which he was intrusted. First, that he was called and, in a certain sense, commissioned to that office even from the time of his conversion, and that in obedience to that call, after he was baptised, he

at once preached Christ to the Jews. Secondly, that during a period of seclusion he received further preparation for his ministry, the mystery of the Gospel being made known to him by express revelation from Jesus Christ; after which period he is classed, with Barnabas, among prophets and teachers. Thirdly, that his separation at Antioch under the authority of the Holy Ghost first formally constituted him an apostle; power and authority being now given him, as to the Twelve on the day of Pentecost, to execute all the functions of this office to which Barnabas together with him was consecrated by the same authority. Lastly, that those specialties of his office, which distinguished him from Barnabas, James the Lord's brother, and others, making him a channel for the direct revelation of divine truth from Christ, so that his testimony had in all respects the same primary authority as that of the Twelve,—were gradually developed and acknowledged in the Church.

This view of the gradual development of the apostleship of St Paul is confirmed by his own explanations in the Epistle to the Galatians, which was written some ten or twelve years after his mission from Antioch. He commences his argument against the Judaising teachers in those parts by proving, that he is an apostle, not merely as being sufficiently commissioned to be a minister of the Church, as others might be,—of whom he speaks as made apostles by human agency,—but as having received immediately from Jesus Christ the same powers as the Twelve themselves received. His apostolic office did not depend on the mission which was given at Antioch, although that defined the time when he was formally separated for the work. He declares that the Gospel which he preached he knew, not,

as others had learnt it, from the teaching of man, but by revelation from Christ Himself. God, not man, had called him and revealed Christ *in him*, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. He had had no communication whatever with any of the Twelve till three years after his conversion, and then only for a fortnight with Peter at Jerusalem. And yet when, fourteen years after his conversion, he went up to Jerusalem, and conferred with the apostles there, he found that the Gospel, which in the meanwhile he had been preaching among the Gentiles, agreed in all respects with that which the leaders of the Church there had received and taught. He did indeed first communicate to them the substance of his own teaching, that there might be no possibility of his being on any point mistaken, or of his having taught defective or partial truths as if they were the complete Gospel of Jesus Christ;—as he expresses it, "lest anyhow, from whatever cause, I should run "or had run in vain." But he found that even the most eminent of the apostles,—it mattered not how distinguished,—the very pillars of the Church,—had nothing whatever to add to that which he himself had taught; so that the leaders, James, Cephas, and John, acknowledged that he was as truly and as fully an apostle of Christ as they themselves were. Now here we must observe that it is distinctly implied that, at the time of his first visit to Jerusalem, apostolic powers were neither claimed by him nor recognised in him by others. It is impossible of course to conceive that during his intercourse with Peter he would not inform him of the revelation, which he had received from Jesus Christ, of the great facts of the Christian faith, and of the intimation, given to him from the first, that he was to witness for Christ both to Jews and Gentiles.

But to suppose that he was then known, as one equal in office with the Twelve, would be to contradict that which follows: for, eleven years afterwards, for the first time he received complete assurance himself of the fulness of his own powers, and was then first definitely and publicly acknowledged by the other apostles as holding the same office with themselves. This is perfectly consistent with that which we concluded from the history; namely, that between his first intercourse with Peter and James, and the conference at Jerusalem, he had received at Antioch his formal mission as an apostle, and that, though at first appointed merely as holding the same office with Barnabas, his apostolic powers became strengthened and enlarged as they were exercised, so that he became gradually more conscious himself, and gave more evidence to others, that he was not only set apart for a great mission, but that he was able to speak with the authority of one who, through the revelations he had received and the abundance of the Spirit dwelling in him, was an independent and additional witness to the Gospel of God.

It is however of more consequence to our argument to notice, what were the powers exercised by St Paul by virtue of his separation with Barnabas to the apostolic office, than to consider the special powers which were assigned to him personally. And there is little difficulty in determining these, because the only difference between the acts of St Paul, and those of others holding the same office, is that he was a primary witness to divine truth, while the others are but secondary; and therefore all acts, in which this primary witness is not needed, must be common to the office. We have already observed, that in their missionary journeyings Barnabas and Paul not only preached Christ but

founded Churches and ordained presbyters in every city. The second journey of St Paul was taken in company with Silas. On this journey he carried the Gospel into Phrygia and Galatia, and thence through Troas to the shores of Europe, where he preached Christ and made and baptised disciples in Philippi, Thessalonica, and other towns of Macedonia, thence proceeding to Athens and Corinth, where he remained a year and six months,—and passing thence to Ephesus, he sailed to Cæsarea, and having visited Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, and saluted the Church there, he again returns to Antioch.

In the brief outline which the history gives of this missionary journey there is nothing, beyond the assurance we might have that what was done in one case would also be done in others, to indicate that anything was done by Paul beyond preaching the Gospel of Christ to Jews and Gentiles. But we have collateral evidence which proves distinctly that Churches, organised societies of Christians, were formed by him in all places where men believed on Christ. The epistles to the Thessalonians were apparently written by him during his eighteen months' residence in Corinth. They are addressed to "the Church of "the Thessalonians," and he writes to them largely of their mutual duties as members of one body, and especially prays them to recognise those "that labour "among them, and are over them in the Lord, and ad- "monish them, and to esteem them very highly indeed "in love for their work's sake." That these were presbyters appointed by Paul himself, during his residence at Thessalonica, where few of the Jews believed but a large number of devout Greeks, will hardly be doubted. It has been hastily concluded indeed, that, because the

history (Acts, xvii. 2) states that Paul went into the synagogue of the Thessalonian Jews and reasoned with them three Sabbath-days, he remained at Thessalonica only three weeks. However the language of his epistles to the Christians there (cf. *e.g.* 1 Thess. ii. 9-12; 2 Thess. iii. 7-10) certainly seems to imply a much longer residence in Thessalonica.

Again the Epistle to the Galatians, who first received the Gospel during this journey of St Paul, also contains indications of the exercise of his apostolic powers amongst them. They received the Spirit "from the "hearing of faith," that is subsequently to, and as the consequence of, his preaching the Gospel among them. How this would ordinarily be communicated, is evident from the instance at Ephesus,—which is recorded in the history, and to which we have already referred,—where some disciples of John were baptised and, on Paul's laying his hands upon them, received gifts of the Holy Spirit and spake with tongues and prophesied. In this epistle, also, he distinctly recognises two classes in the Churches of Galatia, the teachers and the taught:* the first of whom must have held a definite office, because they are to be supported by those to whom they ministered the Word. We shall have studied the previous teaching of the New Testament to little purpose if we imagine that these pastors of the flock were self-appointed, or exercised their office as stewards of the household without authority from Christ.

This epistle however was written undoubtedly after a second visit of the apostle to the Churches of Galatia,

* Κοινωνείτω ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς.—vi. 6.

during which he* confirmed the hearts of all the disciples by further instruction. It will not be necessary to refer to other journeyings of St Paul at present except to notice the evidence afforded of the apostolic authority exercised by him over the presbyters of the Churches which he planted. He summons the presbyters of the Church in Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, a distance of some fifty miles, and charges them to follow the example of his own labours amongst them, and to be faithful shepherds of the flock. For his apostolic office included, as indeed his epistles sufficiently show, the charge of all the Churches founded by himself, which, as he himself says, became, as the Churches increased in number and in importance, a daily and almost insupportable burden.

The apostolic writings however which exhibit most distinctly the various functions of the apostolic office are St Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians. These we shall have to examine in a following chapter somewhat minutely, in order to discover some of the characteristics of the internal life of the Church. I refer to them now merely to illustrate the apostolic work of St Paul himself. The First Epistle to the Corinthians seems to have been written about three years after the apostle's first visit to Corinth, and it is probable that in the interval a second visit to Corinth had taken place, which is not recorded in the history. These epistles exhibit a somewhat different scene from any which we have hitherto witnessed, and an amount of religious activity and Church life, with which, except

* ἐπιστηρίζων πάντας τοὺς μαθήτας. This word is used for that superadded instruction for the confirmation of the faith, which the apostles gave on their second or subsequent visits to the Churches which they founded. Acts, xiv. 22; xv. 41; and xviii. 23. It answers to the second part of the charge given by Christ to the Eleven.

for this collateral testimony, we should not certainly have ventured to fill up the fragmentary sketch of the labours of the apostle which the history supplies. In regard to the question before us, of his own apostolic work, he is the more explicit because he is arguing against some who disparaged his apostolic powers. As regards himself he reminds the Corinthians that "the "signs of an apostle were wrought among them in all "patience and signs and wonders and powers;"* and undoubtedly the sign of an apostle was not merely that he worked miracles himself, but also that through him those gifts were bestowed which were for the edification of the Church. Indeed that which especially marked the preaching of the Gospel at Corinth by St Paul was, that it was followed by an outpouring, larger than usual, of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit upon those who believed. St Paul (1 Cor. i. 6) thanked his God that the testimony of Christ was so confirmed.† He further reminds the Corinthians that his own simple testimony to Christ crucified was "in demonstration of "the Spirit and of power," which, although it includes the spiritual power of the Gospel on the conscience, certainly does not exclude the external proofs of its divine authority afforded by the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in writing to the Romans about the same time, he refers to those things which Christ wrought in him, for the obedience of the Gentiles, during his journeys: "by word and by deed, in the "power of signs and wonders, in the power of the "Spirit of God."

It will be instructive however to gather together some of the notices, contained in the epistles and also

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.

† ἐβεβαιώθη. The use of the aorist tense here must be noticed.

in the history, of the apostolic work of St Paul in this city, as they afford altogether a complete illustration of the fulfilment by him of the charge given by Jesus Christ to the Eleven before His ascension.

We learn, that, in accordance with the command of the Lord, Paul preached there first to the Jews, and, when they opposed and blasphemed, he turned to the Gentiles. The substance of his preaching was Christ crucified. He sums it up in one passage (1 Cor. xv. 1-8) which contains the principal articles of the Christian faith. These he had himself received by direct revelation from Jesus Christ; these first of all he delivered to them as the Gospel, by which they would be saved if they kept in memory what he preached unto them, unless indeed their faith was wholly in vain. Those who believed were baptised; but even as Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples, so the apostle in most cases committed the office of baptising to others, thus indicating from the first, as his Master did, the distribution of offices in the Church. But besides preaching the first principles of the Gospel, and bringing men into the fold of Christ, he taught those who were baptised all things that the Lord had commanded him. He praises the Corinthians that they remembered him in all things, and kept the "ordinances,"—or it ought to be translated the "traditions,"*—as he had delivered these to them. This word is twice used by him in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians,† and in all cases evidently means certain instructions as to the order and discipline of the Church, which were so called, because, having himself derived them from the teaching of Christ's Spirit, he transmitted them to those whom he taught. Those which he mentions refer to

* παραδόσεις. † ii. 15; iii. 6.

such things as the relations between the sexes, the administration of the Lord's Supper, the support of the ministry, the exercise of spiritual gifts in the public assemblies, when the Church is gathered together in one place,—and generally to all things being done decently and in order. He claims that all, however eminent as prophets or endued with spiritual gifts, should recognise the directions he gave as having the authority of Christ; although, in some cases, he expressly distinguishes between those things for which there were the express commands of Christ,—such as the law of marriage,—and those respecting which he himself exercised a judgment enlightened by the Spirit, as a faithful steward of God's house. But above and beyond all these directions for the general edification of the Church, he spoke wisdom among them that are perfect,—as indeed all his epistles abundantly testify —the profound spiritual truths of the kingdom suited for those whose spiritual faculties were exercised to discern between good and evil. Another very important part of his apostolic work consisted in the exercise of discipline, in its ecclesiastical sense, among the members of the Church. This question will be considered in a following chapter when we examine the internal state of the Church in Corinth. For the present it is sufficient to observe, that the apostle claimed for himself authority subordinate to Christ alone, and he assumes the whole personal responsibility in regard to the exercise of discipline, whilst he seeks their concurrence and co-operation in this necessary work. In all things, he appeals to their intelligence and their own sense of what is right and consistent with the Christian life, and bids them judge themselves whether his words are not in accordance with enlight-

ened Christian reason; he declares that his only power is for the truth, he has none in opposition to Christ's truth; that this power is for edification, not for destruction; he will in all things proceed, not by arbitrary authority, but according to recognised principles of justice and equity,—requiring (for instance) two or three witnesses, as the law required, in judging of those cases which demanded judgment; yet he asserts without hesitation his own apostolic authority, in the full assurance that Christ was with him according to His promise, and that whatever he should bind on earth would be bound in heaven, and whatever he should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven.

Comparing these notices of the apostle's work contained in his epistles, with those which the history supplies, we have no difficulty in determining what are the functions of the apostolic office exercised by St Paul, as he went about from place to place in fulfilment of the mission he had received under the authority of the Spirit. He preached the Gospel, he made disciples, he communicated spiritual gifts, he appointed the pastors and teachers of the newly-planted Church, he gave instructions as to its order, he exercised authority in cases of discipline; in short under Christ, he was the governor of the Churches which he had founded. And we may ask,—apart from the miraculous nature of the spiritual gifts, which as we shall see more fully afterwards was but a temporary accident—apart also from the specialty belonging to St Paul's apostleship, in common with that of the Twelve, that he was a primary witness to divine truth, whilst others are secondary,—have we not, in the labours of St Paul, an office corresponding with that which was marked out by the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ as neces-

sary in His Church, in order that all pastoral functions may be concentrated in a person, and may thus be personal responsibilities under the government of the conscience; and therefore necessary in order that the last charge of Jesus Christ may have its complete fulfilment, and the promise of His divine presence to the end of the world be to its full extent realised? We shall have hereafter to consider the evidence which St Paul's later epistles supply, that this same office with the same pastoral functions he committed to others.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

BETWEEN the first and second missionary journey of St Paul an event took place, the significance of which in all its bearings on Church questions is not surpassed by any in the apostolic history. In order however that we may not be misled by any inapplicable precedents, or use any precedents servilely as merely supplying rules, it will be necessary to pay much attention to all the governing principles of that action which resulted in the first council of the Christian Church.

That, Christianity being an outgrowth from Judaism, the old organisation supplied certain materials for the new at first, but then, though itself of divine origin and authority, died away entirely, even as the original seed dies, out of which the plant is evolved from its hidden germ,—is now to us not only obviously true, as a matter of fact, but is seen to be the necessary consequence of the fundamental principles of the Gospel. But we find in the New Testament that the struggles, through which the Church emancipated itself from the bondage of the law,—the birth-throes of the truly Christian system,—were both severe and prolonged. We might ask, Why did not Jesus Christ expressly abrogate the old system? why did He, on the contrary, not only Himself observe the ordinances of the law, which may

be explained on other grounds,—but leave His disciples without ever teaching them that the perpetual observance of these ordinances was unnecessary? He recognises the law, ceremonial as well as moral, as of divine authority, and though from time to time He asserts His own superiority to legal ordinances, as being the Son of God, yet the inference that His disciples were in Him delivered from the bondage of the old law could hardly have been gathered by them from His teaching. We cannot have a more convincing proof that Jesus Christ was not a legislator, but the revealer and the author of a new life. Indeed we may say, with all reverence, that He could not have made new laws to rescind the old law, which God gave. For a law, that is really of God, cannot be abrogated or cancelled. But it may, through the action of a principle in a sphere higher than its own, have its spirit so fulfilled that its letter becomes unnecessary. And the spiritual life which Jesus taught,—for example in the Sermon on the Mount,—and which the Spirit of the risen Redeemer imparted to His disciples, is in its fundamental principles identical with the holiness, righteousness, and truth which the old law embodied, and is the complete fulfilment of these principles. Yet not in the letter, for Jesus Christ also taught that the vigour and intensity of this new spiritual life were such that it could not be confined in the old forms, which would burst and be destroyed by its action. But we must proceed a little further in order to understand the question. The old forms were given to contain a religious life which, though in its origin and elementary principles it in no wise differed from the Christian life,—for the righteous men under the law, as St Paul frequently argues, in many things anticipated the Gospel,—yet in its mode

was very diverse: so to speak, there are the same elements in each but they are differently combined. The old system was the external embodiment of law. The Gospel, through faith in Jesus Christ, was to raise men out of the domain of law, as He Himself expounded, into a more truly spiritual sphere, in which obedience would be rendered in the truth and freedom of the spirit, not in the bondage of the letter. This great principle of the Gospel, at first but dimly apprehended by the disciples of Christ, even after the Holy Ghost was given, it was the special office of St Paul, "according to the wisdom given to him," to exhibit distinctly and completely in all its relations to divine law. But we must not suppose that he taught any really new doctrine, or did more than bring forth into the clear light of day that which the Son of Man Himself had taught, though in hidden sayings and parables. In order that we may perceive this more distinctly, we must remember, that there were two classes of persons, who in our Lord's days religiously observed the ordinances of the law, but from very different motives. There were humble and godly souls, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, like Simeon and Anna, who loved God's law and ordinances, because in them they saw, as David saw, though but imperfectly and dimly, the glory of God in His sanctuary. Such persons might have, and often had at first, strong prejudices against all that was new; they naturally said, "the old is better:" but the light of the Gospel gradually dispelled their prejudices, and brought them at last to Jesus Christ. Such an one, if we may judge from all that is related of him, not only in Scripture but elsewhere, was James, the Lord's brother. But on the other hand there were many men,—including almost all the Pharisees, and indeed the

majority of the Jewish nation,—who loved the ordinances of the law, not because they saw God therein, nor merely because of religious habits or national associations,—though these gave additional strength to their convictions,—but because—as St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans traces the spirit to its origin—the principle of law in the ordinances fostered in them a self-complacent confidence in their own righteousness. They loved the law as being law: simply because it gave rules to be obeyed on the ground of authority, and not because it was holy, just, and good. And the result of this unspiritual use of the law and its ordinances was, that the spirit was to such men wholly lost in the letter. Righteousness with them was the scrupulous observance of rules, and the more the rules were multiplied and made rigorous, the more righteous did they seem to themselves and to others to become. And thus the very authority of the ordinances of the law became in them the source of the worst and most hopeless form of spiritual evil. Now it is unnecessary to show that the distinctive characteristic of Jesus Christ's ministry was His opposition to this form of spiritual evil, which at last avenged itself, as it seemed, in His crucifixion. Our Lord Jesus Christ therefore did, in His life and death, most emphatically affirm the same truth as to the law, which St Paul afterwards expounded; and it was through the truth, which was set forth in Christ, being received spiritually by His disciples, and becoming under the teaching of His Spirit a vital energy in His Church,—and not in consequence of any express directions,—that the law of ordinances was to be gradually superseded by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which is not law in the proper sense of the word.

But it is evident, as has been already observed, that the consequences, which must flow from the truths revealed in Christ, were very imperfectly apprehended by all His disciples at first. The admission of uncircumcised persons into fellowship with Jesus Christ and His Church seemed, even to Peter and the rest of the apostles, a strange and unholy thing. The gift of the Holy Spirit to such persons, on the occasion of the conversion of Cornelius, first proved to the apostles that their admission was in accordance with the will of Christ, and they accepted it as such on the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Then gradually the consistency of this with the principles of that Gospel, which they had received from Jesus Christ and the Spirit of truth, became more and more apparent to them, and to the Church generally. But, as Jesus Christ foretold would be the case, there were already those within the Church, whose characters were the result, not of the spiritual principles of His truth, but of false and unspiritual principles; tares sown by the enemy; or as St Paul describes such persons, with reference to the very question of the relation of the law to the Gospel, "pseudo-disciples "admitted under false pretences, who entered the "Church as it were by a side door to spy out our "liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they "might bring us into bondage;" * men whose hearts had never been set free by the Spirit of life from the bondage of law,—and therefore no real disciples of Christ,—but who brought into the Church all the old spirit of dependence on law, and who not only did not understand the true liberty of the Gospel,—that was the case with many,—but watched and opposed everything that tended to its development. To them the Gospel was

* Gal. ii. 4.

nothing more than a superadded law, something to make it more possible for them to be righteous in their own estimation. That such persons were a very small minority in the Church at this time, and that much of the strong attachment to the old ordinances among the early Jewish Christians was, like that of Peter and James, perfectly consistent with genuine faith in Christ, is abundantly evident. Yet it is also evident that this pseudo-Christian body within the Church exercised considerable influence even over genuine Christians, by working on their prejudices, and on their fears of the consequence of uncontrolled liberty.

Some men of this class came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, after the return of Paul and Barnabas from their first missionary journey, when the Church there was filled with joy at the good tidings of the conversion of the Gentiles. We may well conceive that the scene presented in the Church in Antioch, and the reports of the extension of Christ's kingdom among the uncircumcised, would awaken in such men strong feelings of jealousy and alarm. The privileged standing of God's ancient people was assailed. All the bonds of righteousness and holiness were, in their judgment, being disannulled. They did not indeed represent the mind of the apostles in Jerusalem, and they must have known they did not, because the conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles was a notorious fact there: but relying on the strong Jewish feeling of many of their fellow-Christians, they maintained that this new liberty was unholy and evil, and that, unless the Christians gathered from the Gentiles were, after their conversion, circumcised and made subject to the Mosaical law, they could not be saved. It is easy to imagine with what arguments from the Old Testament they would confirm this

assertion; how clearly they would prove, that the law being of divine institution, and never having been abrogated, must still be binding; how they would adduce the example of Jesus Christ Himself in support of their opinion. Could men expect to be saved without obedience to these divine laws when the Lord Himself conformed to them? There was, the historian says, no small dissension and disputation between these men and the two apostles of the Gentiles: and we must infer, that they were not silenced by the arguments of the latter, but probably their specious reasonings influenced the minds of some at Antioch who were weak in faith and knowledge. It was therefore decided, that Paul and Barnabas, with certain others of the brethren at Antioch, should go up to the apostles and presbyters at Jerusalem about this question. St Paul, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians (which I assume to refer to the same occasion, for the difficulties attending any other view are quite insuperable) tells us that this decision was arrived at in consequence of a revelation made to himself or to some prophet, and indicating, by the authority of the Spirit, this method of solving the difficulty. We must therefore regard this course of referring a question to a central authority, not merely as a convenient method of meeting a present difficulty, but one in its principle having the express sanction of the Divine Head of the Church. It was indeed a new feature in Church life, though by no means new in its principle, for Christ Himself had expressly taught the value and power of united action in His Church. But considering the immense consequence of the result that ensued, not merely as regards the question then at issue, but as supplying principles for the organic and corporate action

of the Church in all ages, we cannot be surprised that it was a case in which an express revelation was given for the direction of the Church.

But we must look a little further into this principle, which reaches into the whole subject of the authority of the Church corporate, and inquire why such action was necessary and expressly directed in this particular instance. We cannot of course suppose that in such a question as this of the circumcision of the Gentiles, in which the apostle Paul had learnt the truth of the Gospel directly from Christ, he was liable to error or needed some further certainty. And that the Gentile Church generally was assured that these Judaising teachers were in error is evident. But there were several reasons for the course adopted, which we may at once infer. First, and most obviously, in order to strengthen the weak and prevent, as far as possible, their minds from being perverted by this false doctrine. But also,—and this reason is at least as weighty as the preceding,—for the preservation and the manifestation of the unity of the Church; that the Churches in Antioch and in Jerusalem might be demonstrated to be one in Christ. It was the response in the Church's life to Jesus Christ's own prayer, that all who believe on Him through the word of His apostles may be one in Him, and thus prove to the world that the Head of the Church is indeed of God. And this action would tend, and as it proved did actually tend, to unity in several ways. First, by the agreement of all in one faith being established; secondly, by the knowledge of the truth being more catholic, through the different aspects of truth presented to different minds and to Christians differently circumstanced; lastly by the common recognition of the different adaptations of the

Christian life to the different circumstances of men, with such limitations as might be necessary for the practical maintenance of unity.

The history informs us that Paul and Barnabas, with the others sent with them to represent the Antioch Church,—one of whom we learn from St Paul, was Titus a Greek convert,—left for Jerusalem on this very important mission, accompanied * by the prayers and earnest sympathies of their brethren. As they passed through Phœnicia and Samaria, and reported the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy to all the brethren. The seeds of evil had not been sown in those parts, and Samaria, we may well suppose, would not be a congenial soil for this form of error. On arriving at Jerusalem, they were publicly received by the Church, and by the apostles and the presbyters, and they gave an account of the wonderful things God had wrought by their ministry. This account of the conversion of Gentiles being publicly given, at once the adversaries entered their protest. The Judaisers from Antioch do not appear to have come to Jerusalem, but there were some there already of the sect of the Pharisees, men in whom the old leaven of Pharisaism still worked although they belonged outwardly to the Christian body, who thoroughly sympathised with the Judaising doctrine. "It was necessary," they maintained, "to circumcise "these Gentile converts, and to charge them to observe "the law of Moses." This at once brought the question to an issue, and the apostles and the presbyters met together in solemn council to consider the matter. We must also conclude that the whole Church was present, since the historian speaks of "*the whole multitude*" as listening to Paul and Barnabas, which is the expression

* προπεμφθέντες ὑπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Compare, *e.g.*, Acts, xx. 38; xxi. 5.

used by him to describe the body of the disciples,* as distinguished from apostles and presbyters.

After much controversy, Peter rises and gives his counsel. He rests it, not, it must be noticed, on any inherent apostolic power possessed by him of deciding such questions, but on certain acknowledged facts, and on the fundamental principles of the Gospel of Christ. He reminds them that he had himself been chosen, many years before, as the instrument through whom the Gentiles should hear the Gospel and believe. That God, by giving to Gentiles on that occasion the gifts of the Holy Ghost, proved that He made no difference between circumcision and uncircumcision, but that faith alone purified their hearts. "Why therefore," he says, addressing those who had been arguing against Paul and Barnabas, "do ye tempt God, by this attempt "to lay upon the necks of the disciples a yoke which "neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, but by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ trust to be saved "even as these Gentiles?" For, indeed, putting any unnecessary impediments in the way of men's salvation, fettering God's gift with any vexatious and burdensome conditions, is to *tempt God*, that is, to try Him whether He will exercise His power to enable men to overcome these obstacles. And this is a broad and great principle, applicable in all Church questions, and worthy to be ever borne in remembrance,—that every attempt to make the way of life narrower than God has made it, by needless restrictions, is a sin against God Himself as well as against the brethren.

It is impossible not to recognise in these words of Peter great evangelical truths, with which the writings of St Paul have made our minds familiar; indeed the

* Acts, iv. 32; vi. 2, 5; xv. 30; xxi. 22.

argument is precisely that which was urged on Peter by Paul himself on a subsequent occasion,* and we can hardly be mistaken in tracing in them the influence on St Peter's own mind of Paul's previous intercourse in private with himself and other leading apostles, which is mentioned in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. An opinion so emphatically and distinctly expressed by the apostle of the circumcision, agreeing entirely with the teaching of St Paul, silenced and probably surprised the objectors. Then, in confirmation of that which had fallen from St Peter, Paul and Barnabas gave the assembled multitude an account of the signs and wonders which God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, which were proofs corroborative of that instance to which Peter had referred, that God Himself accepted as His own uncircumcised Gentiles. It is well to notice here, how external proofs are combined with arguments from the spiritual principles of the Gospel. These two modes of proof affect different minds differently. The Jewish mind, St Paul elsewhere observes, generally required a sign, some proof of divine power; the higher intellect of the Greeks demanded wisdom. It is thus, not only with those who believe not, but with those who believe. Some, who are incapable of appreciating the full force of purely spiritual principles, yield at once, humbly and submissively, to an expression of divine authority. Others of a higher order of faith, like St Paul himself, are led by the Spirit of Christ into such clear daylight of spiritual truth, that to them the mere expression of authority and power is a far inferior evidence to the truth. But in his teaching, which was to be adapted to all minds, St Paul combined the external with the internal evi-

* Gal. ii. 15, 16.

dence of the truth, as his Master had done before him. Indeed generally, until the Church had attained its maturity, and its very existence had become a proof of the divine power residing in it, the miraculous gifts were necessary as an external aid to the spiritual power of the Gospel on the consciences of men.

We now come, in the history of this Christian assembly, to that which is the most significant and instructive incident in all these proceedings at Jerusalem. Thus far the ground seems clear. The complete answer is given to all the specious arguments for bringing the Gentiles under bondage to the law. It is not only Peter that has spoken; the Holy Ghost Himself has testified. He Himself has declared the Gentile believers to be free from any such obligations; and to insist on them as necessary to salvation is to contradict the first principle of the Gospel, that all men must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. But is the question to rest here? These great truths having been asserted and vindicated, is no concession to be made to the feelings, the habits of thought, the religious associations, of that large body of Christians, who were brought up under the law of Moses, and who were in Christ before all their Gentile brethren? Is there to be nothing to prove that Jews and Gentiles are one body, and that whilst the one does not judge the liberty of the other, neither does the other needlessly offend the religious feelings of his Jewish brethren? Nay more, although this truth of salvation only by the grace of Christ is a most fundamental truth, yet has not every truth, as we have seen in Christ's own teaching, its opposite? Is there not some antithetical truth therefore, which ought to be affirmed, if this united action is to promote true and permanent union? Had there been merely the asser-

tion of the freedom of the Gentile Christian, even the truth itself, in all its relations to man, would have been but imperfectly exhibited, whilst the unity of the body of Christ would have been seriously impaired. Catholic truth and catholic unity are necessary one to the other.

At this juncture, James the Lord's brother, the apostle of the Jerusalem Church, the representative of the Israelites indeed,—James the Just, as he was called, according to the true Jewish idea of righteousness, in this like his father Joseph,—rises and demands attention. He speaks with even more authority than Peter himself.* Symeon had told them,—the Jewish feeling of James is indicated even by this Hebrew form of Peter's name,—how God had visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And this had been plainly foretold by the prophets, that the restoration of the kingdom of David would be followed by the Gentiles seeking the Lord, and being called by His name even as Israel was: so that this conversion of the Gentiles was nothing contrary to the law and the prophets but their fulfilment. "Wherefore I judge," he adds, "that we should not trouble those of the Gen-" tiles who are turning to the Lord." But there were some practices common among Gentiles, which were in themselves either actually evil or dangerous, whilst they were peculiarly offensive to Jewish religious feelings, and calculated to prevent all brotherly intercourse between Gentile and Jewish Christians, if it were not known that they were prohibited to the former. The first of these was "the pollutions of idols,"—meats which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, the eating of

* ἀκούσατέ μου—ἐγὼ κρίνω: compare with the latter expression τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀποστ. xvi. 4.

which was in the Jewish mind so inseparably connected with idolatry itself, that it was regarded with the utmost abhorrence, not as a mere ceremonial defilement, but as almost an act of apostasy. Indeed there might be much danger in late converts from heathenism having their own consciences defiled, perhaps even old heathenish feelings excited, by coming so near to idolatrous abominations. Modern Christian missions in India and elsewhere would supply many illustrations of this. Indeed the nice distinctions drawn by St Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, on this subject of eating meats offered to idols, prove how expedient a general prohibition of them would be to the Gentile converts themselves, whilst it was necessary for unity between Jew and Gentile. The relation of this question to some of the most vital principles of the Gospel, and to the incarnation itself will appear hereafter.* We are probably surprised to find in the same class with "meats offered to idols," the sin of fornication; but the difficulty wholly disappears when we consider the actual circumstances. The religious pollution of the one would be quite as fatal to the spiritual life, if the conscience were defiled by it, as the moral pollution of the other could be; and no one can have any acquaintance with the literature of the Greeks without knowing unhappily too well, how extremely lax among them were the relations between the sexes. Indeed the Epistles of St Paul to the Corinthians and even to the Thessalonians sufficiently prove how much Greeks, even when Christians, had to learn in this matter; and it is evident also from the former epistles that some justified fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols, on the self-same grounds, namely, that all things were

* Part IV. Chap. II. 3 (*b*).

lawful to the Christian. So that there was beneath the surface an intimate connection between the two questions, and, as we shall see ultimately,* both are related to the fundamental truths of the Gospel. And besides this, in Jewish feelings and in the Old Testament history idolatrous pollutions and moral impurities were in close connection.† The third practice which St James mentioned, as necessary to be prohibited, stood on different grounds. "Blood and things "strangled" may seem to us a purely ceremonial question, and we can hardly understand why that should have been prohibited to Gentiles, which appears to involve no religious or moral danger whatever. It might be sufficient explanation to say, that, if it were the custom among Gentile Christians to eat "the "flesh with the blood," it would have debarred all strict Jews from free social intercourse with their Gentile brethren. But I think the reason lies still deeper. This prohibition of eating blood was given before the law of Moses, and was merely confirmed by that law. Its meaning however is explained by the law,‡ and it appears that the reason of the prohibition is to be sought in the law of sacrifice. So long therefore as sacrifice was a divine ordinance, so long was it sacrilegious to eat the blood which was "given upon the "altar to make atonement." Now although Jesus Christ had virtually made an end of sacrifices by the one offering of Himself, yet sacrifice was still a divine ordinance not expressly abrogated, continuing indeed till the overthrow of the Temple at Jerusalem by the judgment of God, and till that time the laws of sacri-

* Part IV. Chap. II. 3 (*b*), and p. 387 *infra*.

† See, *e.g.*, Num. xxv. 1, 2; and 1 Cor. x. 7, 8.

‡ Compare Gen. ix. 4 and Lev. xvii. 10-15.

fice were observed by Jewish Christians. Eating the blood therefore was, to their feelings, not merely a ceremonial defilement, but a gross act of impiety; and not to their feelings only, for to say the least it would be in any one an act of irreverence towards the most solemn of all God's ordinances, so long as that divine ordinance in any way continued. As the Christian mind gradually realised how entirely the legal sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ and superseded by Him, the prohibition would be less necessary, and thus we do not find this same question discussed in any of the epistles of St Paul. But St James may teach us, that truth will gain nothing from irreverence. After the overthrow of the Temple, when sacrifices wholly ceased, the conditions of the question were changed.

There were then strong reasons why these three practices should be prohibited to Gentile Christians: the first on religious grounds; the second on moral; the third on grounds of reverence to an ordinance of God. It had always been the custom to read portions of the law of Moses in the synagogues every Sabbath-day, and this usage was no doubt continued in the assemblies of Jewish Christians, which St James would include in this term,* and probably also in the Churches of the Gentiles, which were first organised by Jewish teachers. There is certainly reason to believe that the reading of the law and the prophets in the Christian Church has been continued from the times of the apostles. And, St James argues, what can be the meaning of this "preaching of Moses" if practices are allowed among the Gentiles which virtually deny that the law of Moses is of God?

The practical wisdom, the complete grasp of the

* Cf. James, ii. 2.

whole question at issue, indicated in the counsel of this great apostle, fills us with admiration even to the present day. I confess I cannot examine it without having the conviction greatly strengthened that James the Lord's brother could not have been one of the original Twelve; for had he been, he would not have held the inferior position in that body which was assigned to James the son of Alpheus. But he was prepared, through a different training from that which the Twelve received, for dealing with these intricate and momentous questions. His judgment is indeed a precedent for all ages, as to the spirit in which the united action of the Church should be conducted: a spirit of the deepest and largest sympathy with the feelings, habits, and even prejudices of all classes. The counsel of James, as indeed might have been expected, at once commended itself to the judgment of all assembled. It was determined by the apostles and the presbyters, with the whole Church, to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas two leading men of the Church in Jerusalem, chosen for this purpose, with a letter embodying the conclusion recommended by James. The letter was from the apostles and the presbyters, addressed by them *as brethren*,* to "the brethren "gathered from the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and "Cilicia." They disclaimed the Judaising teachers, who had been unsettling the minds of the brethren, and stated further that they had sent back with Barnabas and Paul, those faithful servants of the Lord, two men whom they had chosen to report their judgment on these questions. "For," the epistle continues, "it "seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay "upon you no additional burden except the following

* This is probably the true reading. See p. 378 *infra*.

" things which are necessary, from which if ye keep " yourselves, ye shall do well." The Codex Bezæ and some of the ancient versions add words here, which at all events are an instructive gloss on the text, "And " whatsoever things ye would not should be done to " yourselves, do ye not to another." They remind us certainly of the fundamental principle of this decision of the first council of the Church, I mean the law of brotherly love; the law which Jesus Christ Himself marked out from the beginning, as that which must govern all relations in the fellowship of His people. This epistle was taken to Antioch, and publicly delivered to the assembled Church. Judas and Silas also, being prophets, and therefore entitled and qualified to address the brethren in their public assembly, exhorted them with many words, and confirmed them in the faith.

This portion of the history of the apostolic Church is full of instruction as to the true nature, purpose, and force of all conciliar action by the Church in all ages. We must examine some points more minutely, in order to elicit the real governing principles.

First then, as to the constitution of the assembly at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas went up to "the " apostles and elders" about the question. By "the " apostles" is evidently meant the whole apostolic body who had, if I may use the term, their headquarters at Jerusalem. Besides James and Peter, we learn from St Paul's own account, that John was there: who were present besides, it would of course be useless to conjecture, but it is evident that there must have been sufficient to represent the whole body of apostles. In their encyclical letter they entitle themselves not "such and " such apostles," or "the apostles who are at Jeru- " salem," but "*the apostles;*" and the tone of authority

with which they write evidently assumes that they are speaking in behalf of the whole apostolic body. The same argument would lead us to infer also, that the presbyters present were not merely the local presbyters in Jerusalem, but a large enough body to represent the presbytery of the Church generally. It is very improbable that if there had been only the Jerusalem presbyters, the letter would run from "the apostles and "the presbyters" without any further explanation. If, to take the parallel case of the Sanhedrim, we should read that some question was referred to the chief priests and elders, we certainly should not understand by that expression, merely the elders of the synagogues in Jerusalem, but a representative body. I do not mean that in the Church there was as yet an organised representative body as in the Jewish polity; but the principle of such representation is involved in the language.* Moreover, besides these representatives of the Jewish Church, there were present not only Paul and Barnabas but some others from the Church in Antioch. They indeed came to state their own case: and we might infer that they were rather advocates than judges. And yet that would be a conclusion in accordance with a more formally and exactly defined state of the organisation, and not with the actual condition of the Church. Indeed in this question the Holy Spirit was the judge; and to His will Paul and Barnabas bore testimony as conclusive as that borne by Peter or James. So that this council at Jerusalem was really, though in a rough and element-

* The expression (xvi. 4) "the apostles and presbyters who (*were*) in "Jerusalem" (τοῖς ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ) does not prove that the presbyters resided there, any more than the apostles. It simply implies that they met and passed these decrees in Jerusalem.

ary way, a representation of the whole Church both of Jews and Gentiles.

But was the action of the Church confined to "the "apostles and presbyters"? It will be well, before we examine into this question, to notice a certain peculiarity in the use of the article by the historian. The Christians in Antioch decide on referring the question to "the apostles and presbyters," * as if the two classes formed one body. Afterwards it is always "the apostles and the presbyters," indicating two distinct classes in the body. Now that in the decision "the apostles and presbyters" hold a position distinct from that of the multitude, "the whole "Church," is so expressly stated, that no one, I suppose, would controvert it. To them the question was referred. They came together to consider the matter. The decision was made by them, though with the concurrence and co-operation of the Church. The letter is in their name, for the word "*and*" before brethren is probably an interpolation, being omitted in all the oldest and best MSS., though it appears in some of the oldest versions. Again the decrees are expressly said to have been passed "by the apostles "and the presbyters who were in Jerusalem." For the presbyters, having received a part of the apostolic ministry, a charge with the apostles, though subordinate, of the flock of Christ, are united with them in this solemn act of teaching what Christ has commanded, and "the apostles and the presbyters" together form the *Boulé* or higher council of the Church. At the same time two points are to be noticed. First that others besides the apostles and the pres-

* *πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους.* Only one of the more ancient MSS. has *τοὺς πρ.*

byters were both present at this assembly and took part in the discussions. The language of the history implies not only the presence of the whole body of the disciples, as we have already observed, but also that the discussion had extended to them, for it is stated that they kept silence (ἐσίγησε πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος) while Paul and Barnabas were speaking. Indeed as there was much disputation, and as it is exceedingly improbable that the advocates of Judaising doctrine, of whom St Paul speaks in such emphatic terms of reprobation, would be all found among the presbyters, we cannot but infer that the discussion was open to all. The spirit of the whole action was entirely contrary to the exclusion of any persons or arguments, that might in any way contribute to the elucidation of the truth; it was manifestly a free council, and not a mere private meeting of some office-bearers. It was in fact much what the *Agora* was in archaic times, as described in Homer: in which the council of the nobles governed the decisions, but the people were present and freely expressed their opinion. And it must be remembered that the power of free speech in the councils of the Church is the true test of the character of these assemblies. Free discussion, and arbitrary government either by one person or by a privileged class, have been found in all ages, and under all polities, to be incompatible with each other. Again, not only were the multitude present, but we are expressly told that the whole Church concurred in the decision and in the action taken upon it. By what method the joint decision of the apostles and presbyters, and of the whole Church, was given and expressed, we are not told, and it is quite a subordinate question. In the accounts of the primitive *Agora* in

Homer, it has been observed,* that the true power,—as it certainly was in the council at Jerusalem,—was the power of persuasion by speech; the acclamation was the vote, but "there is no decision by numbers, the "doctrine of majorities is a later invention, an expe- "dient of a more advanced social organisation." That the more formal mode of decision is a legitimate, and indeed a necessary, result of the development of such institutions, we may learn in the history of all deliberative assemblies in Greece and Rome, as well as in modern states; but it is no essential part of the primitive institution, and we must not conclude, if we find no traces of it in the first corporate assembly of the Church, that therefore it is unsuitable or unnecessary in the more perfect form of a Church council.

We conclude then, as regards the constitution of this first council of the Church, that although the decrees were those of the apostles and the presbyters, yet the counsel of all was freely admitted, and the consent of the whole Church was obtained, before action was taken. It may indeed be asked, What if the multitude had not concurred? if the Judaising spirit had so corrupted the Church at Jerusalem, that the multitude had dissented from all action affirming the liberties of their Gentile brethren? We might also ask, What if the presbyters had differed from the apostles on this question, and had held that other matters, besides those mentioned by St James, were necessary to be observed by all Christians? But the history does not answer such questions and nothing is gained by asking them. We are simply told what was done with the concurrence of all. It was the

* See 'Juventus Mundi,' by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, Chap. XI., On the Polity of the Heroic Age.

triumph of truth over error, the judgment of wisdom on divers matters of consequence to the interests of the Church; and the apostles and presbyters, with the whole Church, were the instruments and organs, according to Christ's ordinance, by which these truths and judgments were authoritatively pronounced and published. If we should wish to inquire further, we must consider another fundamental principle in all real corporate action of the Church: namely, that the Church, according to its true constitution, is not a collection of separate and isolated parts, but a body in which the various members mutually affect and influence one another; and, therefore, such as some members are such will others be. It must be a symptom of some great defect in the organisation of the body, if one class in the Church is wholly unlike another, or has feelings, interests, and judgments contrary to those of the other members of the body. This principle however will appear in a very definite form in a future stage of our investigation, and we need not discuss it further here.

But we must proceed to examine a second question as to the decision of this council at Jerusalem; I mean, What was its true force, authority, and effect? It is certainly impossible that any decision could have higher authority than this: "It hath seemed good to the Holy "Ghost and to us." And this is by no means the same as "to us being inspired by the Holy Ghost," or "to "the Holy Ghost speaking by us." But the fact, to which this remarkable language refers, is that which we have already noticed, and which meets us continually throughout this history of the Acts of the Apostles, namely, that in all matters affecting the Church and Gospel of Christ there was, during this

period of the Genesis of the Church, a twofold witness; one given directly by the Holy Ghost, the other given by the Church, quickened indeed and enlightened by Him, yet a really human testimony. In regard to the question which was discussed, the Holy Ghost Himself bore witness by the gifts which he bestowed on Cornelius and others being yet uncircumcised, and by the signs and wonders with which He accompanied and confirmed the labours of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles. On the other hand the apostles and presbyters, in the exercise of an enlightened spiritual judgment, recognised the consistency of these acts of the Holy Ghost with the Gospel of Christ and with the Word of God, and drew several practical conclusions which required a spiritual insight into the whole principles of the question at issue. For it must be observed that there were two parts in the decision: the one, a necessary and permanent truth, that men are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ without keeping the law of Moses; the other, subordinate rules, necessary for the present, such as were afterwards technically called canons of discipline. The former was proved by the independent acts of the Spirit; the necessity for the latter was perceived through that wisdom with which He endued these apostles and other pastors of His Church. It is therefore impossible to conceive a decision that could ever be pronounced with more weighty testimony. The effect of its promulgation was in the highest degree beneficial to the whole Church. At Antioch the false teachers were silenced and the brethren "rejoiced for the consolation." As Paul and Silas, shortly afterwards, passed through the cities in which Churches had been already founded, they delivered to them these decrees of the apostles and presbyters not

merely to read, but *to keep*. And although the encyclical epistle was addressed only to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, yet the decisions of the council were evidently not regarded by Paul as limited to particular places, for the Churches specially mentioned are those in Lycaonia. "And so," the historian adds, "were the Churches established in the faith, and "increased in number daily." The value of authoritative and corporate action in the Church, in matters both of faith and of discipline, was now made manifest, and a precedent established for all future ages.

But whilst the history proves clearly the value of the due exercise of Church authority, yet we may gather from it, when compared with subsequent apostolic writings, very necessary cautions as to the force and extent of such authority. If we should hastily conclude from the decisions of the council at Jerusalem, that it is the office of the Church to pronounce decisions having the kind of force which divine laws had under the old dispensation,—decisions as to doctrine which are to be believed because of the authority which determines them; rules of discipline, which are laws to the conscience, on the same ground,—we should wholly misinterpret the history. Nothing has been more apparent throughout the teaching of Jesus Christ than that His kingdom is not a dispensation of law but of life; and, as Christ Himself was not a legislator, so neither can it be the office of His Church, which is the expression on earth of His life, to legislate, in the proper sense of the word. It is only on this principle that certain facts, which we gather from the epistles of St Paul, are capable of being explained.

The history informs us that on the second missionary journey of St Paul, after having visited the Churches

already established in Lycaonia, he proceeded to preach the Gospel in Galatia. With the results of the council at Jerusalem fresh in his mind, being also the bearer of its decisions to the Churches already gathered from the Gentiles, undoubtedly so far as their authority had force he would have used them. It is possible that there were no Jewish converts in Galatia, and the rules of discipline may not have seemed to him of so much practical consequence there as elsewhere. But the noticeable fact is this; that some time after the Churches had been formed in Galatia, probably after a second visit from the apostle, those who troubled the minds of the brethren and perverted the Gospel of Christ came there also. We may gather indeed from the Epistle to the Galatians, that these Judaising teachers had somewhat altered their ground: that they insisted now on the necessity of the divine ordinances of the Old Testament to the perfection of the Christian, and to the full possession of the blessings of the Gospel; that they pointed to Peter and James, and the mother Church at Jerusalem where the law was observed, as the true and complete type of the Messiah's kingdom. And St Paul's argument goes to prove, not merely that Gentile converts must not be compelled to be circumcised, but that they ought not to be circumcised, or in any way to bring themselves under bondage to the law; and further, that not only Gentiles, but Jews also, were free from the obligations of the law. The question had evidently advanced into a different stage. Originally it was whether Gentiles ought to be received at all into the Church without being circumcised; then whether being admitted, they must be required to obey the law; then whether, although not absolutely necessary, it was

a gain to them to observe its ordinances. But in all its stages the question was fundamentally the same. And if the decision at Jerusalem were, or were intended to be, a law of the Church, to be obeyed simply because it had been passed; if the authority of the Church were to be the ground of faith; is it to be conceived that this decision, on the question at issue between himself and the Judaising teachers, would never have been mentioned in the whole epistle? Would he not have said, *Ecclesia locuta est: causa finita est?* But he takes a very different course; he asserts and proves his own apostolic authority; he declares that he had been recognised, by those who were regarded as the pillars of the Church, as the apostle of the Gentiles; he tells how Peter, after having acknowledged his apostolic office and therefore the doctrine of Christian liberty which he taught, had been led at Antioch, through an unworthy fear of the Judaisers, to act a double part; —and thus far he does indicate that the authority of the Church corporate was superior to that of any single apostle;—but he proceeds to argue the question on wholly independent grounds; on the general principles of the Gospel, and the conclusions that flow from them; from the testimony of the Spirit in their own case which they received without the law; from Old Testament history and teaching; and on these he bases his appeals to their understandings and their conscience. Shall we therefore say that the decrees of the solemn council at Jerusalem were wanting in authority? or not rather, that authority, however unexceptionable, is not the true ground for faith and obedience?

But we find yet more distinct and conclusive evidence in this matter. The Church at Corinth was planted by St Paul in the same missionary journey.

There were there both Jews and Greeks who believed. The converts were chiefly from the Gentiles, but Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue there, believed with all his house, and was one of the few converts who was baptised by the apostle himself. The prejudices of the Jews there were violent, and the feeling between Jews and Greeks in that city was imbittered by this new element of discord. It does not appear however that the question as to the circumcising of the Gentile converts was ever raised here: probably the Greek prejudice against Jews was much too strong for such a doctrine to find any acceptance. But what of the rule of discipline agreed on at Jerusalem, the *concordat* between Jewish and Gentile Christians? Now the remarkable fact is this, that while the main principles of the rule are explained and affirmed by St Paul, and proved to be consistent with Christian charity, yet he never hints that the rule must be obeyed because it is established by the authority of the Church, nor does he refer to it at all, as he surely must have done, if Church authority were sufficient, or intended, finally to close such questions for all the members of the body of Christ. For example, the question of meats offered to idols had arisen at Corinth. No rule is either given or referred to by St Paul, but, the perfect liberty of Christians in such matters being allowed, the caution is given, "Take heed lest this liberty of yours become a "stumbling-block to them that are weak." Nay further Christians are advised, if they are at a feast with unbelievers, to eat whatever is set before them, asking no questions for conscience' sake,—that is, as if it were a matter of conscience in itself to abstain from such meats, or as if there was any defilement in the thing itself: but if informed that it is meat offered in sacri-

fice to idols, then not to eat it, "for his sake that showed "it and for conscience' sake: but I mean not thine "own conscience but the other man's." That is, meats offered to idols are to be refused as such, to avoid offences. On the other hand, as regards the other Gentile practice, prohibited by the council at Jerusalem, the sin of fornication, St Paul takes different ground. Meats are in themselves matters of indifference: neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse. Some in Corinth argued,—as has been argued elsewhere,—that the relations between the sexes are of the same nature. The apostle points out the essential difference: the latter touches the personality of the man, and pollutes by an unhallowed union the body which is the member of Christ. Now these reasonings and wise Christian distinctions are perfectly consistent with the rule of the Jerusalem council, if it be interpreted as an instruction, the true spirit and meaning of which ought to be understood and observed among Christians. But they are wholly inconsistent,—they cannot possibly be reconciled,—with any theory as to the authority of the Church, according to which its decisions are binding on the conscience as laws, and are to be obeyed servilely because of the authority which has pronounced them.

Shall it be said that this makes the authority of the Church to be no authority at all? On the contrary, it shows it to be authority of the highest order, like that of God Himself over His reasonable and intelligent creatures. Inferior authority, such as that of the State, makes laws as mere rules,—it can rise no higher. But God's permanent moral laws cannot be mere rules. We can only obey them by knowing the reason of them, and they require an enlightened reason to interpret

them. If He says, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, we must also remember that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. If He says, Thou shalt do no murder, enlightened reason must determine what constitutes murder. When the Christian Church turns from her high office of being a minister of life, to be a maker of laws to fetter men's consciences and the energies of the Christian life, she not only misunderstands her vocation, but the authority she would claim is a far meaner and feebler thing, than that which of right belongs to her, which is reasonable and really spiritual, the authority of Truth over man's heart and conscience.

One other point we must notice, before we leave this subject; I mean, the legitimate sphere of Church authority. We have seen, in considering the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself as to His Church,* that the chief purposes contemplated by Him in the united and corporate action of the Church were, on the one hand its peace, on the other, the removal of causes of offences by which the souls of His little ones are endangered. And the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus Christ† to abide with His disciples for ever, to guide into all the truth, by which the world should be convinced, faith established, and the hearts of those that believe edified. But this Spirit would be given, not to solve all theological questions which the inquisitive mind of man might raise, but such only as should properly belong to the revelation of Jesus Christ. No Church authority therefore, however exalted, can propose any doctrine to the belief of Christians except that which has been revealed, and only so far as it is revealed. A claim on the part of any Church authority to determine all religious and

* Part II. Chap. V. † Part II. Chap. XII.

theological questions, is not only to substitute the Church for the Spirit, but it is really to assign an office to the Church which does not belong to the Spirit Himself.

We must observe that the first corporate action of the Church which is recorded in the Sacred History fulfilled all the conditions indicated by Jesus Christ. It was necessary to the peace of the Church that the question should be decided by sufficient authority. The Judaising doctrines imperilled the spiritual welfare of Christ's little ones, because they taught that salvation was to be sought through the observance of laws and rules, and thus substituted an opposite principle for that of Christ's Gospel. Again, the Holy Spirit had given distinct testimony in this matter. Under His teaching an enlightened spiritual judgment discerned, that the external testimony of the Spirit was in perfect harmony both with the Gospel, and with Holy Scripture by which also the Holy Ghost had spoken. Lastly, this decision expressly disclaimed laying any burden on the disciples, except in things necessary for avoiding offences on the one hand, and securing moral purity on the other. In regard to all these matters the Church is appointed by Jesus Christ to speak with authority for the good of His people, and He has promised that whatever His Church, acting legitimately, and in due order, within its proper sphere, and following the testimony of His Spirit, shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever it shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

CHAPTER X.

APOLLOS.

THE condition of the Church in Corinth, which we shall examine in a following chapter, is so nearly connected with the history of Apollos, that a few remarks on the position which he held relatively to St Paul and the apostolic body will prepare the way for our future investigations. Apollos, or Apollonius, was a Hellenistic Jew of Alexandria, a learned man and skilful in argument,—for such seems to be the force of the word λόγιος here,—and mighty in the Scriptures. Alexandria was the origin and the seat of a form of Judaism, differing in many of its features from that which had its centre in Jerusalem. At one period indeed the Egyptian Jews were openly separated from those in Jerusalem, having a temple of their own at Leontopolis; but in the times of the New Testament the schism appears to have been healed. The tone of Jewish feeling however at Alexandria continued very distinct from that which prevailed among the strict Jews. It produced a school of thought,—of which Philon, many of whose writings are preserved, was an eminent representative,—in which the principles of the Greek philosophy were freely applied to the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures, and which therefore differed widely from the school of Rabbinical learning in which the

disciples of Gamaliel had been trained. The description of Apollos given by St Luke certainly is consistent with the supposition that he was one who had acquired the Alexandrian learning; and the warnings, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, against substituting the wisdom of man for the mysteries of divine truth, were evidently directed, not indeed against Apollos himself whom St Paul recognises as a fellow-labourer, but against those who misused the weapons which by him were employed legitimately in the maintenance of the faith. Thus the ministry of Apollos became a new element in the intellectual development of the Gospel, and was undoubtedly of great value in the relation of its truths to the Greek mind, although, as must be the case in all development of truth, it exposed the Church to new dangers. The influence of the Alexandrian school of thought on the Christian mind is sufficiently apparent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which if not written by Apollos himself, (as there seems good reason to believe), undoubtedly uses much of the language of Alexandrian philosophy.

This learned Alexandrian had become, by some means or other, acquainted with the teaching of John the Baptist, and was convinced of his divine mission, and strongly impressed with the truth and power of his ministry, as a real fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures. The spiritual principles of the Baptist's teaching, which struck at the root of the carnal interpretations of the law, and which therefore would coincide with the best phase of Alexandrian thought, had completely prepared this earnest and devout man for a hearty reception of the Gospel. He had also heard enough of the life of Jesus Christ to recognise in Him the Saviour of whom John had proclaimed himself the

forerunner. Apollos came to Ephesus, full of zeal for that portion of the truth which he already knew, at the time when Paul had gone up to Jerusalem, and when as yet no Christian Church had been established in that city. But the Jewish converts, Aquila and Priscilla his wife, Paul's companions and fellow-labourers, had been left there by the apostle; and they took Apollos and expounded to him the "way of God" more perfectly. What was it, we may ask, in which Apollos needed the more exact and complete instruction, which he received from these Christian Jews? He had been already "instructed in the way of the Lord," and he "taught accurately the things about Jesus,"—which certainly must include the facts of the Redeemer's history,—and yet a more perfect knowledge of the way of God was necessary for him. A passage that follows in the history explains, and appears to be inserted for the express purpose of explaining, what was deficient in Apollos. Others like him, who knew only the baptism of John, were subsequently found by St Paul at Ephesus. They knew nothing of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; but after they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, the apostle laid his hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues and prophesied. We must therefore conclude that Apollos also, being similarly circumstanced with them, needed and received from Aquila and Priscilla that knowledge of the gift of the Holy Ghost to the Church of Christ, which the baptism of John did not impart. But will it be supposed that having heard of this gift, learning how necessary it was for the kingdom of God, Apollos was content without himself receiving the gift, and partaking of the blessings of Christ's Church in

their fulness? Already he was "fervent in spirit," but the gifts of the Holy Ghost, qualifying men for the several functions of the members of Christ's body, are spiritual powers of a higher order than any which a disciple of the Baptist possessed. And yet we find that when he went from Ephesus to Corinth, where St Paul had before him preached the Gospel, and where Apollos watered what the apostle had planted, such signs of spiritual power accompanied his ministrations, that some professed themselves followers of Apollos rather than of Paul. It is hardly possible to conceive that such would have been the case in a Church in which, as we learn from the apostle's epistles, the value of spiritual gifts was somewhat overestimated, if the external proofs of the Spirit's presence, which attended St Paul's ministry there, did not also confirm the labours of Apollos.

We must infer therefore, that having been baptised at Ephesus into Jesus Christ, as the whole history proves that he would have been, he also received gifts of the Holy Ghost such as to qualify him for the work of an evangelist in which he laboured with such success. Whether these were conferred through the laying on of the hands of any expressly authorised by the Spirit, or whether, as in the conversion of the Gentiles, they were bestowed on Apollos without these external means, it is unnecessary to inquire. All that the conciseness of the history enables us to determine, by a comparison with St Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, is that he was made by the Holy Spirit one of those who were "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of "God." But we must observe that whilst the apostle classes Apollos with himself, as a partaker of the same

apostolic ministry, yet he speaks of himself as the master-builder (ἀρχιτέκτων),* of Apollos and others at Corinth as subordinate labourers; of himself as a father in Christ, of them as mere instructors (παιδαγωγοί).† That Apollos himself was heartily at one with the apostle, and that there was not in Paul's own mind any jealousy of his learned and eloquent fellow-labourer, is evident from the fact that the apostle urged him to visit Corinth again with Timotheus and others;‡ but it is evident also, that there were those at Corinth, whose admiration of the peculiar gifts of the philosophical Alexandrian led them to depreciate the really higher powers of the apostle; and, in reference to these erroneous and unspiritual views of the Christian ministry, St Paul asserts emphatically his own apostolic authority: he claims of the Corinthian Christians that they should be followers of him; he sends to them Timotheus to remind them (he says) "of my ways "which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every "Church;" he asks those who despised his apostolic authority, whether they would have him come to them with the rod of government and judgment, or as a friend and brother, in love and gentleness. In Apollos and Paul we have therefore a very instructive illustration, first of the oneness of the Christian ministry in all its several offices, secondly of the subordination of all its functions to the apostolic office. The unity of Christ's Church is indeed, as is often argued, a unity in diversity; but it is also certain, that unless in this diversity there be order, the unity cannot exist.

* 1 Cor. iii. 10. † 1 Cor. iv. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH IN CORINTH.

THE epistles of St Paul to the Corinthian Christians have already thrown much light on several questions which have come under our consideration. I shall now examine them as exhibiting a condition of Church life, in the treatment of which by the apostle some elementary laws of the kingdom of heaven, which were expounded in the teaching of Jesus Christ, are clearly exemplified.

These epistles were written, it would seem, about three years after the apostle's eighteen months' sojourn in that city. It is a remarkable fact in the history of the Christian Church, that nowhere had the preaching of the Gospel been followed by more abundant fruits than in voluptuous and licentious Corinth. Although the Jews there, with the exception of some of their leading men, rejected the word of life, the Greeks received it with much eagerness: many believed and were baptised, and the apostle was encouraged to remain in Corinth, notwithstanding the violent opposition of his countrymen, by a vision which assured him that he would be preserved from injury, and that the Lord had much people in this city. The attempt of the Jews to persecute was frustrated by the impartiality of the Roman proconsul, and under the tol-

erant government of the philosophical and amiable Gallio, and apparently with a popular feeling against its adversaries, the new doctrine spread rapidly. The visit of Apollos, who was in the apostolical age what Justin "philosopher and martyr" was in the next century of the Christian era, and whose mode of treating revealed truth would have peculiar attractions for the Greek mind, also no doubt gave great impulse to the work. So that in Corinth we may see what the Church became in a few years of rapid growth, in a condition of comparative ease and prosperity, with much to stimulate its progress, but little to direct and control it. We may easily trace in the epistles the results of the various influences under which the Church there developed itself; which influences indeed, as we may judge from the letter of Clement of Rome to the same Church at a later period, affected its internal life even to the close of the first century. We find, in St Paul's description of them, much apparent vigour in the religious life of the Corinthian Church; many spiritual gifts and much knowledge. But their real advancement in the Christian life was small. The apostle cannot address them as spiritual men, but, at best, as mere babes in Christ, who could only receive the first principles of the Gospel. Indeed the evils actually existing in that Church were terrible foreshadowings of those which in after-ages should grow up to portentous magnitude in the Church of God, and from time to time almost choke the life of the body. Of these evils, the first that St Paul mentions is the party spirit that prevailed amongst them; the same sectarian feelings, which have bred innumerable strifes and schisms among Christians to the present day, were already actively at work in the new-born Church.

Again their progress in knowledge and spiritual gifts, which was no true growth in spiritual life, made them think lightly of the apostolic office and authority, whilst they overestimated really inferior powers, which depended on human learning and eloquence rather than on the wisdom of God, and the realities of Christ's kingdom. And, notwithstanding their high pretensions, forms of moral evil were springing up in this Church which, unless they had been checked at once by sharp and decisive treatment, must have eaten out the religious life of the community. A case of gross immorality had occurred amongst the Christians, such as the heathen themselves would not have tolerated: and yet it was not only allowed to pass unnoticed, but it did not in the least disturb the self-complacent feelings with which the Corinthians regarded their own religious state. For the tendency of the party feelings which prevailed amongst them was to destroy their consciousness of the reality of corporate life in Christ. This was further evidenced by their bringing lawsuits between Christians before the tribunals in which heathen sat as judges, without attempting to settle such disputes by peaceful arbitration amongst themselves. On the other hand, there were some who even excused and justified the practice of those licentious indulgences, for which heathen Corinth, the worshipper of Aphrodite, was always notorious. The unrestrained intercourse of Corinthian Christians with their heathen fellow-citizens also brought them into contact with the religious pollutions of idolatrous worship, and was an offence and snare to the consciences of their weaker brethren. We are not surprised to find, in a Church which so much needed reformation, that their observance of the Lord's Supper was attended with great

irregularities, so that it had almost lost its distinctive religious character, and degenerated into an ordinary meal. Again the spiritual gifts, which abounded among them, were often unaccompanied by the grace of charity, and were used for display or to gratify the love of the marvellous, rather than for the edification of the brethren; whilst the due order of the Church was, in the exercise of these gifts, neglected as a matter of little consequence. Some among them denied the resurrection of the body, one of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith; and from the second epistle it appears that false teachers, claiming apostolical powers, had come to Corinth, and gained considerable influence over many in the absence of St Paul. In fact, although as yet there was no disintegration of the Christian society, but the whole Church continued to meet as one body,* yet all the corruptions, heresies, and schisms, which have in after-ages dishonoured Christianity, were already in embryo in the Corinthian Church. So rapidly and surely was the prediction of Jesus Christ fulfilled that the kingdom of heaven would be as a field, in which tares should be sown among the wheat, and appear as soon as ever the good seed should put forth its fruit. But the same divine wisdom, which foresaw these conditions of Church life, provided also very distinct and sufficient guidance as to the true method of dealing with such evils. And this method, as we have traced it through the teaching and acts of Jesus Christ, is twofold. First, as a general rule, Judge not: let the wheat and the tares grow together till the harvest; if branches in Christ bear no fruit, God will in His time take them away. But on the other hand, when there are offences, pernicious to the souls of men, and the in-

* 1 Cor. xi. 18; xiv. 23.

terests of the Church; when holy things are in danger of being profaned, and the mysteries of the kingdom are being wasted on those who will only abuse them; then judgment must be exercised: and for this purpose is authority given to the Church, and the apostolic office instituted. We will examine how these fundamental laws of the kingdom of heaven were applied by the apostle Paul to the condition of the Corinthian Church.

(1.) It is obvious to every student of Holy Scripture, that our relations to Christ are at times represented as real only in those who believe unto salvation. "In "this," St John says, "the children of God are mani- "fest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth "not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth "not his brother." And many religious persons, perceiving very distinctly this side of the truth, fail to recognise that which is equally certain, that relations in the kingdom of heaven are formed, not by the spiritual qualities that belong to them, but in order to produce and cultivate these qualities. Such persons would have no hesitation as to the method of dealing with evils such as appeared in the Corinthian Church. They would consider that the first, if not the only, duty of a faithful minister of Christ would be to remind such men that their Church relations are altogether unreal and delusive, unless their faith bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Let them not deceive themselves with forms and ordinances, with the name of the Church, and the husk and shell of religion, when the question is whether they have any part in Christ at all. Now St Paul in these epistles does occasionally speak out such truths as these quite as plainly and unreservedly as the most earnest advocates of a merely subjective religion could express them. He tells the

Corinthians that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; that he who partakes unworthily of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper eats and drinks condemnation to himself instead of salvation; that all gifts, and all knowledge, and all outward obedience to God's commandments, without love in the heart, are worthless. He bids them examine themselves whether they be in the faith, and prove their own selves; for if Jesus Christ be not in their hearts by faith, they are mere reprobates, dross and not precious metal. In describing the ministry of the Gospel, and that not merely amongst unconverted heathens, but among those Christians whom he was addressing, he sums up its message to them in the words, "Be ye reconciled to "God;"* in which the use of the aorist tense and the passive voice distinctly implies a call from a state of alienation from God to the state of reconciliation which is established by the propitiation of Christ; from the state in which sins are not forgiven and put away, to the state in which they are. And he beseeches the Corinthians not to receive in vain this grace of God, but now, in God's accepted time, to be reconciled to Him in Christ. All this, I need hardly say, is perfectly in accordance with other teaching of St Paul, in which the faith, that works by love, is proved to be that which alone realises in us our union with Christ and the blessings of His redemption.

And yet a very little consideration might convince us, that, even on the purely subjective view of our relations to Christ, that is, supposing them to have no reality at all apart from our own faith, this method of dealing with unspiritual Christians cannot by itself fulfil that law of the kingdom which Jesus Christ

* Καταλλάγητε τῷ Θεῷ, 2 Cor. v. 20.

marked out for His disciples. Because it proceeds on the assumption, that those, who profess and call themselves Christians and members of Christ, are not what they profess and call themselves. That is, it does, to some extent at least, pass judgment. Now, in examining the distinctive teaching of St John's Gospel, we found that the rudimentary faith, which Jesus Christ Himself recognised as the commencement of spiritual life in man, lies far too deep in the human heart, and has its first beginnings too feeble and small, for us to determine where it really exists; so that the law of Christ's kingdom, which is as necessary for the ministry of His Gospel as for all other duties of a Christian man, would require generally that those who profess to believe in Christ should be treated as if their faith were real. We have no right to assume that there is not in them a seed of divine life, which in time might bring forth fruit unto life eternal, as if we could discriminate now between wheat and tares: we have no right to treat children of God as children of the wicked one, because of their infirmities, or to withhold from them the precious jewels of the grace of God, as if they were unclean beasts. These considerations alone would be sufficient to explain why St Paul, in fulfilling the law of Christ in his ministry, adopted towards these imperfect Christians at Corinth a very different method generally from that of which we find occasional instances; why in his epistles he would treat them as if their profession of faith were a reality, and not as if it were a hypocritical delusion.

But in fact St Paul's language to these Corinthians goes far beyond this, and cannot be explained merely by supposing that he charitably assumed a hypothesis which might be utterly untrue. Indeed it must be

confessed, that the theory of "the judgment of charity," by which strong language as to Church relations is justified by some who hold the exclusively subjective view of those relations, is hardly sufficient to satisfy any very earnest and honest mind. There is an unreality in this hypothetical Church life, which is quite inconsistent with the intense reality and transparent truth of Jesus Christ's Gospel. There is no such unreality in His acts and teaching. Judas was not an apostle, exercising the functions and powers of the office to the very time of his fall, because he was charitably supposed to have the true spiritual qualifications for the office; he is declared by Him who searches the heart to be a devil and unclean, and yet he remains one of the chosen Twelve. The barren branches of the true vine are really branches in Christ, until the divine Husbandman cuts them off, and are not merely supposed to be there by the judgment of charity. It is unnecessary here to retrace the steps, through which we have concluded that, in the kingdom of heaven, a state must be distinguished from the qualities which properly belong to that state; that there is an actual objective reality in the relations of the kingdom, independent of the faith which makes them subjectively real to us. But we must observe here that the purely subjective view, even though directed by the largest and most overflowing charity, would suggest a very different mode of treatment of unspiritual Christians, from that which the objective view would demand. It would suggest hesitation and extreme caution in speaking of those relations to Christ which it supposes to depend wholly on a man's personal faith; moral and spiritual evils would be condemned, as not only contradictory to such relations, but as evidences that they have yet to

be formed. The objective view, on the contrary, would insist on the reality of the relations, as supplying the true power for overcoming such evils, and would condemn the evils as monstrous and impious inconsistencies with the sacredness and holiness of the state in which those are placed who commit them. That the latter is the method adopted by St Paul throughout these epistles, although from time to time he challenges the subjective reality of the spiritual standing of those whom he addressed; that the whole argument proceeds on the ground of high and holy relations having been already formed between these Christians and Jesus Christ their Lord, with which relations all unholy acts are inconsistent, but which continue in spite of these inconsistencies, a light to dispel their darkness, not to be quenched by it,—is too apparent to be questioned by any impartial reader of the New Testament.

He begins his First Epistle, which contains the severest rebukes and remonstrances, by addressing these Christians, as "the Church of God which is in "Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called, saints." Our modern use of the terms answering to ἅγιος, and ἁγιάζω, is so exclusively subjective, that we forget that, in the language in the Old Testament, they represent primarily the state of consecration to God, and secondarily the qualities proper to that state. If there could be any question as to St Paul's using the terms in the primary sense, it ought to be set at rest by another passage in the same epistle, in which he declares * that an unbelieving husband is "sanctified," ἡγίασται, in a believing wife, and an unbelieving wife in a believing husband; and that the children of such a union are not unclean but "holy." For if the unbelieving heathen

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

is in some sort sanctified, because he is united to a Christian in God's ordinance of marriage, how much more is the Christian himself sanctified, being united to Jesus Christ in the yet holier ordinance of baptism?

Further, although these Corinthians were "carnal" and walked according to men," yet they are reminded that they are the very temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them. "All things," the apostle says to them, "are yours; and ye are Christ's" and Christ is God's." And they are a holy temple not only as a corporate society, built up by God Himself through His ministers;* but also individually and personally, for their bodies are (he reminds them) the members of Christ,† and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and are therefore not to be profaned by unholy unions, but to be used in all things to the glory of God. Yet this near relation to Christ would not shelter them from the consequences of continuing in sin; Israel of old had a baptism, and spiritual meat and drink corresponding to the two sacraments by which our union with Christ is formed and maintained, yet most of them perished in the wilderness.‡ And the communion with the body and blood of Christ which we have in the bread which we break and the cup which we bless, by which we are one body in Him, ought to warn us against the danger of any fellowship with the pollutions of idolatry.§

If anything further were required to prove how unreservedly the apostle assumes the reality of these relations, as the basis of all his exhortations to holiness of life, we might further examine the description given by him of the body into which, by one Spirit, we

* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.
† vi. 15, 19.
‡ x. 1-11.
§ x. 16-21.

are all baptised, and the organisation of which is through the various gifts of the Spirit to every man. For that this spiritual order is distinct from the personal spiritual life, is evident from his proceeding to remind them of the worthlessness to the man himself of all these spiritual gifts without the life of love in his own heart. But this subject of the body of Christ will be fully considered in a subsequent chapter.

We must therefore conclude first of all that the true remedy for evils in the Church is to be found, not by questioning the reality of the near relations formed with Christ through its ordinances, but by insisting on them as holy and true and spiritual.

(2.) But there is a duty to the Church with regard to some of these evils which must not be forgotten, either in the charity which believes all things and covers the multitude of sins, or in the conviction that these relations are real. The two principles enunciated by Jesus Christ from the beginning, Judge not that ye be not judged; and yet judge so far as not to give that which is holy to the dogs, or to cast your pearls before swine,—meet us continually in all legitimate development of Church life. In Corinth there was one scandalous and notorious offence to which the second of these principles had to be applied. This was a case of fornication, such as even the Gentiles counted abomination, of a man having formed an incestuous connection with his father's wife. There is no necessity for conjecturing any special reasons for the toleration in the Corinthian Church of this enormous crime. The sense of the necessity for discipline will always be in proportion to the sense of the corporate unity of the Church, and that this was little regarded by the Corinthians is evident, as I have already observed, from

the party spirit that prevailed amongst them. It is impossible to realise the truth, that the sin of one is the sin of all, unless the unity of the body be first of all realised. But whatever was the cause of this toleration, the apostle rebukes them sharply for allowing such a scandal to remain, and not mourning with a view to the removal from among them of him who had committed this offence. He proceeds to give directions as to the course to be pursued. The case was notorious, and the facts were patent and not denied; the witnesses which he elsewhere says* he should require, were not needed in this instance for the legal evidence. The apostle therefore, although absent in body, yet present in spirit, had already judged the offender. He claims for himself, it will be observed, the judicial authority and responsibility in this matter. But not independently of the action of the whole Church. He directs that the sentence upon the offender should be passed in a solemn assembly of the Church, in which he himself would be as truly present as if he were with them in the flesh, and which would act with his full apostolic authority. The words in which St Paul describes this assembly† recall forcibly those in which Christ declares, that where two or three are gathered together in His name He Himself is in the midst of them to confirm their acts; and that whatever they should bind on earth should be bound in heaven.

The judgment on this notorious offender was that he should be delivered to Satan to the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit might be saved in the day of the

* 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

† Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ συναχθέντων ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. 1 Cor. v. 4.

Lord Jesus. This same judgment the apostle elsewhere informs Timotheus that he had passed on Hymenæus and Alexander,—men who had rejected faith and good conscience and made shipwreck concerning the faith, —in order that they might learn not to blaspheme. The language of St Paul in both cases seems to imply that the act of discipline would be followed by some supernatural visitation on the condemned. Thus we have seen that the first act of discipline, exercised by the apostolic authority of St Peter, was followed by the sudden death of the offender. Similarly, those in Corinth who abused the ordinance of the Lord's Supper were visited with bodily infirmities and diseases, and not a few died (1 Cor. xi. 30). Such external proofs of the reality of apostolic authority, and of ecclesiastical offences, were necessary during this transition period whilst the Church was being established, even as other miraculous powers were then needed. But all these miraculous accompaniments were but the accidents, which soon passed away in order that the substance might remain. And the substance of the sentence to be passed on the incestuous man at Corinth is his exclusion from the kingdom of heaven and its blessings, and his being given over to the power and dominion of Satan. That this is the true meaning is evident from the words of St Paul himself, who after arguing as to the necessity of judging notorious offenders within the Christian society, concludes, "Take "away the wicked one (τὸν πονηρόν) from amongst your "own selves." The wicked man is to go to his own place, to the dominion of the Evil One, emphatically ὁ πονηρός, of whom he is the willing subject. And yet this awful punishment is really in mercy to the offender, *pro salute animæ;* because it is not an irrevocable and

eternal sentence, like that which shall be passed on sinners in the day of the Lord Jesus, but it is intended to bring him to repentance, if by any means he may recover himself out of the snare of the devil, instead of being taken captive by him at his will, that so his spirit may be saved in that great day.

This case of discipline in the Corinthian Church opens up the whole question. Some points we must reserve for further consideration when we shall examine the Pastoral Epistles of St Paul. But we have sufficient already to enable us to draw conclusions of great importance and of general application. For the apostle here, giving not mere directions and rules but the reasons for them, expounds with great force and clearness the fundamental principles which we gathered from the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. Judgment would be needed, Christ taught His disciples, to prevent the holy things, the sacred relations and sacred ordinances of His kingdom, from being profaned, and also to avert injuries to the spiritual interests of His Church and the souls of His people. He gave no express rules from which they could determine which the cases were for which judgment should be needed; but He committed to them the authority to judge, and left them His Word and His Spirit for their guidance. He gave one example, as a specimen, so to speak, of a case for which the exercise of Church authority would be needed; the case of an irreconcilable dispute between Christians. The man, who should refuse to abide by the decision of the Church, was to be counted by others as a heathen man and a publican. In such a case, discipline would be required to preserve the peace and unity of the body.

St Paul expounds the principle taught by Jesus

Christ in another direction. One reason for the exercise of discipline, mentioned by the apostle, we have already noticed, namely, the benefit to the sinner,—the judgment ordained by Christ being the likeliest means to awaken him to a consciousness of his guilt and danger. So, in writing to the Thessalonians, he directs them, "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, "mark that man and keep no company with him that "he may be ashamed; and yet count him not as an "enemy, but admonish him as a brother." It is evident that, in the exercise of Church discipline in all its forms, discrimination and judgment are necessary to determine, first of all, what kind and amount of sentence on any offence would be best suited to benefit one who has sinned. A harsh uncharitable judgment, or any unnecessary interference with men, prying into their actions and motives, meddling with matters not properly within the sphere of Church authority,—far from being any benefit to the person judged, could only injure him. St Paul therefore, in writing to the Galatians, counsels that if any one be even found out in some sin, they who are spiritual as a first measure should restore such an one in a spirit of meekness, "remembering thyself," he says, "lest thou also be "tempted." And St Jude says, "Of some have com-"passion, making a difference; and others save with "fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the "garment spotted by the flesh." Comparing all such directions with that which, we shall find, was the ultimate result of the apostle's counsel as to the incestuous person at Corinth, we may certainly draw this conclusion first of all,—that Church discipline is not intended for isolated offences, but to correct those who persist and continue in sin; nor again for those acts or omis-

sions, the nature of which cannot be determined without scrutinising the motives and intentions of men, but for those which have their evil character written on their front, and which the conscience itself, if it be not utterly stupefied and hardened, will acknowledge to be evil, and deserving of condemnation.

But we must remember, this is only one reason, and not the weightiest, for the exercise of discipline in the Church. That it is but a lesser reason is evident from the fact that, in the first act of discipline in the Church, Ananias and Sapphira had no space or opportunity for repentance. It is indeed impossible for human judgment to discover beforehand what will be the moral effect on the person judged. The wisest and most necessary discipline may only harden the offender, who will often mock at its exercise and rebel against its sentence, and imagine perhaps all the while that he is doing service to God and man by refusing to submit. It is a common argument against Church discipline, that an evil will often gain fresh vigour and repute by being formally condemned. But the reasons for the exercise of discipline, on which St Paul most insists, and in which the laws of the kingdom, as taught by Jesus Christ, are most directly involved, do not concern the offenders themselves, but the Church of Christ. These reasons he sums up in the words, "Know ye not "that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

There are in fact two reasons here. One that all evil examples, and especially bold and unchecked breaches of morality, are contagious; they infect the moral atmosphere; they generate and ripen fruits of evil in others; they spread like leaven through the mass. So the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews cautions them, "lest any root of bitterness springing

" up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: lest " there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau." But St Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, seems to have in his mind, not so much the evil influence of such offences, as the evil character imparted by them to the body in which they are allowed. For the tree is known by its fruits; and the offences of the members of the Church are the sins of the society itself, unless the authority of the Church be exercised to clear itself from the guilt. We know indeed, in all human life, that great crimes coming up to the surface of society, though in themselves apparently exceptional, are indicative of some unsoundness within: and if they should pass uncondemned they would stamp their own infamous character on the whole community. It was this real participation of the whole body in the unreproved sin of the incestuous person, that St Paul urged most of all as the reason for action. This is the weightiest of all arguments for the exercise of discipline, and whenever it is obscured by imperfect views of Church unity, at once discipline falls and is utterly enfeebled, as in the present day. But it is evident that this reason is one which demands judgment to determine, first, what are the offences which thus stamp their own character on the body, and also what should be the nature and extent of the action by which the Church shall free itself from the evil imputation before God and man.

For it will be observed that the necessity for discrimination, which all the reasons for Church discipline indicate, implies also the necessity for some distinctions as to the judgment or sentence required for the several cases to which Church authority rightly extends. It does not follow that all, whom Christians ought to mark with censure as living unworthily of their pro-

fession, ought to be straightway delivered to Satan and declared anathema. Among the Jews there were, in the discipline of the synagogue, at least two kinds of excommunication, the lesser being temporary and a partial separation, the greater the anathema, and the entire cutting off from the congregation. That the apostle had the discipline of the old dispensation in his mind, in the directions given to the Corinthians, is rendered highly probable by his using the very words of the book of Deuteronomy (xxiv. 7) when he commands the excommunication of the offender. But indeed a distinction of this nature has not only its parallel in Jewish custom, but its foundation in principles of justice and mercy. The argument of St Paul, from which he concludes the necessity of casting out the incestuous person from their communion, itself indicates such distinctions. He reminds them that he had charged them, in some former epistle, not to keep company with fornicators; but he did not mean to forbid them to associate with immoral men of this world; this would be to exclude them from all intercourse with the world, which would be neither expedient nor generally possible. Besides which, it was no concern of his to judge the world of unbelievers. But, if any one bearing the name of the Christian brotherhood were living in any notorious sin, with such an one they were not even to eat. The meaning of this is generally supposed to be, that they were not only to separate such an one from their religious communion, but even to avoid social intercourse with him. But looking at St Paul's words in the light of that truth, which we find ever present to his mind, I mean the corporate unity of Christians in all relations of life, we

cannot but interpret his direction especially with reference to that breaking of bread, which is the sacrament of Christian unity, and from which such persons would certainly be excluded, if even in a common meal Christians were forbidden to unite with them. And the preceding argument seems to place this beyond a doubt. The apostle illustrates the necessity for discipline from the law of the Passover, in which unleavened bread only was used. In the kingdom of heaven, Christ is the Paschal Lamb sacrificed for us; the bread which we break in our Christian Passover is the communion of that body, and we, eating together that bread, are, as the apostle elsewhere says, one bread and one body. But a notorious sinner uniting in this communion is a leaven of wickedness which taints the whole, and the bread of the Christian Passover becomes thereby polluted. It must be observed that this argument of the apostle does not imply that the communion of Christ's people is vitiated, or, in his words, that the bread is leavened, by the unbelief or secret sins of some of the number. The presence of Judas at the Lord's Supper was no leavening of the bread, because his sin was neither notorious nor allowed by the rest of the disciples. It is the knowledge and the allowance of the wickedness that constitute the participation in it. But however we understand the apostle's language, we must at all events infer from his general argument that the differences in the nature of the offence against Christ would necessitate certain differences in the discipline exercised; that one stage, as it were, in its exercise would be the suspension of the offender from that ordinance, in which the unity of the body is represented and sealed; another, a formal excision from the

body, by which the excommunicated person is cast out of the Church.

But whilst we trace these principles which must govern the exercise of discipline in Christ's Church, it would be a serious error to suppose, that in the apostolic age such principles were solidified into rules. They were yet in the process of growth, and had none of the rigidity of law. Indeed, it must be ever borne in mind, that, in no period of the Church's existence, if it is to be the exponent of that Gospel which is the opposite of law, can it be legitimately governed by law, in the true and proper sense of the word. A Church, in which the spirit is subordinate and in bondage to mere laws, by whomsoever imposed, cannot represent fully the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We shall find hereafter* to what extent, and for what purposes, the principles of law are required in the exercise of discipline. But it is certain that the tendency to legislate, rather than rely on principles, has often done much injury in regard to this difficult question.

There is indeed sufficient evidence, in the history of this case in the Corinthian Church, to prove that mere rules for the exercise of discipline were very far from the mind of St Paul. Whether the formal act of excommunication, which he authorised and indeed commanded, ever was passed, or whether the penitence of the offender prevented it, we are not able to determine. We should conclude, I think, from the Second Epistle that what was done was rather through the conduct of the majority of the Corinthian Christians, as individuals,† towards the offending person than by

* See Chap. XIV. *infra.*

† ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη ἡ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων.

any formal act of the Church. But, whatever the apostle had at first commanded, like a tender father, rather than a judge and governor, as soon as ever the offender shows signs of penitence, he forgives at once, and that as representing Christ Himself (2 Cor. ii. 10), and he retracts all his severe language, almost as if he had gone too far in his condemnation.

CHAPTER XII.

RELATION OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO THE ORDER OF THE CHURCH.

THE subject which it is proposed to examine in this chapter is one of considerable difficulty, and much caution is required in order to avoid hasty and erroneous conclusions. The difficulty consists in determining with certainty and clearness the limits between that which is supernatural and that which is natural: since not only is nature itself but one mode of the supernatural (for the corn that ripens in the fields is as really of God as the manna that fed the Israelites); but, when we speak of those things that are in the highest and truest sense spiritual, such as the will, the conscience, and the affections, the very terms natural and supernatural are out of place, and without some explanation can only lead to confusion of thought. In order however that our argument may not be embarrassed by other questions than those which are essential to its completeness, we need not discuss the true definition and meaning of the supernatural, but will content ourselves with those distinctions, which the language of Scripture justifies and requires, and which the mind easily recognises, though it may be incapable of analysing the full force of such distinctions.

By the supernatural, then, I mean that which affords

sufficient proof to the understanding of its being the immediate result of the action of some Power superior to nature and to man. And sufficient proof is afforded, when effects are produced without the causes which ordinarily are required to produce them, and without any adequate conceivable cause according to those relations of cause and effect which lie within the range of human knowledge. It will be observed that this definition excludes all effects produced by the Spirit of God in the will, conscience, and affections of man, because it is impossible for us to know what is the relation of cause and effect in that sphere, and therefore what is sufficient proof of the action of a superior power. It limits us to the sphere of nature itself. The supernatural, in this sense, in man can only be in his physical powers and at the most in his natural faculties, such as his speech, his mental attainments, his understanding, in regard to which we do know that certain causes produce certain effects, and are necessary to produce them according to the order of nature. But the proof, that any phenomenon is the result of the action of a power above nature, attains logical certainty, and is a sufficient proof to the understanding, in proportion as the ordinary relations of cause and effect with regard to it are determinate, simple, and necessary; or as we should say purely mechanical: and psychical effects are to us less certain because they are less mechanical, and also are largely affected by the will. So that in proportion as the effects of the presence of the Spirit are spiritual, in the same proportion must they cease to be supernatural, in the strict sense of the word.

The distinctions which are here drawn appear continually in the history and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. His whole life was a manifestation of divine

goodness, wisdom, and truth, appealing to the heart, conscience, and spirit of man: but the proofs of His divine power were the supernatural acts, the signs, wonders, miracles (*σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις*), which He wrought. These gave such testimony to His divine mission as to leave men without excuse: and yet the belief, which rested only on these proofs of His power, oftentimes reached not the heart and conscience, and was powerless for good. He often teaches that faith in His word is of a higher order than that which comes from signs and wonders.

But we must consider how these principles are illustrated in those gifts and powers, which were the result and evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church after the ascension of Jesus Christ. Of these the first, and the most general, was the gift of tongues. And this gift included, as we have found, both certain rapturous emotions in the mind, and also the utterance of these emotions in a language before unknown to the speaker. Both of these were really results of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, but the latter only was supernatural or miraculous, because it alone afforded sufficient proof of the action of a power above nature. The emotions of joy and gratitude to God which were excited were nothing unaccountable, or unreasonable; they had an adequate cause in the great truths of redemption, in which were manifested to their minds the love and mercy of God. The unusual strength of these emotions was undoubtedly due to some spiritual influence, but the laws, according to which such emotions are produced, are much too complicated for such effects to afford in themselves a sufficient proof to the understanding of the action of supernatural power. The only supernatural element

in the gift was the power of speaking in a tongue unknown to the speaker, either previously or at the time. But this was really a much inferior effect of the Spirit's presence. And the greatest effect of the Spirit's power on that day, the conversion of thousands by the preaching of Peter, was not miraculous or strictly supernatural, because the truths which he spoke, confirmed by the external proofs of the Spirit's presence, were calculated to produce certain effects on the minds of those who heard them; that is, though we do not know the relations of cause and effect in spiritual things, and although the unfathomable mystery of the action of any causes on the will prevents us from arguing on such a subject, as we can argue from the sequences of cause and effect in nature, yet we know generally that such truths do produce such effects on the hearts of men.

Again of all spiritual gifts, next to those of the apostolic office, those possessed by prophets were the highest. Undoubtedly in these there was a supernatural or miraculous element; the power of foretelling future events was of that character; so also was that which we understand by a revelation, some intimation *ab extra* as to a course to be pursued, as when the Spirit directed that Barnabas and Saul should be separated for a certain work. But that which was the most important function of the prophet, and of most value for the edification of the Church, was his power of expounding and applying spiritual truth, and this was supernatural only so far as it was acquired without, what is, according to our knowledge and experience, a sufficient cause for such an effect. If through the study of God's Word, meditation, and prayer, with the natural abilities of mind suitable for the work, a man

attains a clear and profound insight into the Gospel of Christ, and great power of discerning its relations to other truth, and of expounding these to others, although we know that the aid and teaching of God's Spirit do thus qualify him, yet the result is not supernatural. There is not sufficient evidence, apart from the moral and spiritual nature of the truth expounded, of the action of a power above nature, to afford in itself a proof that such power is acting. Thus, in the gift of prophesying which was the highest, the supernatural element was much less conspicuous than in the gift of tongues, which was the lowest. The supernatural action was in a higher sphere than the merely physical, in the mind and understanding, and on that account was more excellent, and better suited to reach the hearts and consciences of men; but it was, for the same reason, a less conclusive proof to the understanding of man of the action of supernatural power, and it required higher faculties to discern it. The moral consciousness is not necessary to convince a man that one who turns water into wine, or who raises the dead, has superhuman power; but the conviction that spiritual truth is divine cannot be produced without that consciousness.

The instance of spiritual gifts which we have just considered illustrates also another important truth, which we must not leave unnoticed,—namely that, in the higher spiritual gifts, that truly spiritual power which the Holy Ghost exercises on the heart and conscience, bringing forth there love, joy, peace, and all holy affections and principles, co-operated with that which was miraculous or supernatural. For although, as St Paul reminds us, a man might have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and be destitute

of real love to God and man, yet undoubtedly the love of God's truth, which is love of God, makes men quick to discern and receive His word, and must always greatly facilitate and promote that perception of truth by the understanding, which was the power and excellence of the prophetical gift. But still the supernatural element must not be confounded with that which in the highest sense is spiritual.

Bearing in mind these distinctions, we are able to determine, sufficiently for our argument, both the purpose of the spiritual gifts so far as they were supernatural, and also why it is certain that the supernatural element would be only temporary, and during a transitional period of the Church's life. The miraculous gifts were sufficient proofs to the understandings of men of the divine mission both of Jesus Christ and of His Church. They were given, as we have seen, as a witness, additional to the human testimony given by the original apostles of Jesus Christ, the appointed eye-witnesses of His life, death, and resurrection. They afforded strong corroborative evidence to the supernatural facts of which the apostles testified, and which are the foundation of our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God: evidence also to the divine mission of these apostles, to the divine origin of the revelation made by them, to the fulfilment of the promises of Christ, and to the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself in the Church. They awakened and confirmed faith, stimulated the spiritual life, and in many ways were valuable for the guidance of Christians during the period when the Church was being developed into its complete and permanent form. They authenticated the action and teaching of the Church as long as there was need for such evidence, and until the

evidence was completed in a higher sphere of man's being.

But the period, during which they lasted, was necessarily one of imperfectness, and the true functions of the Church, as adapted for reasonable man, could not be matured during the continuance of supernatural powers. For a faith merely awakened by evidences of power is not that which cleanses the heart and conscience; nor can signs and wonders, appealing as they do to the lower instead of the higher faculties of man, ever raise faith into its truest and noblest sphere of action. As those are declared more blessed who do not see and yet believe, so are they more blessed who believe in the Word of Christ without signs and wonders. Again, supernatural powers prevent the rational faculties of man from having perfectly free play, inasmuch as these powers are more or less interruptions of those sequences of cause and effect, by which reason forms conclusions for the guidance of man: for in that which is supernatural effects follow causes out of their known and accustomed order. Whether therefore we consider supernatural powers in regard to the spiritual being of man or to his rational faculties, we find that they are unsuitable for the perfectness of either; and therefore we might conclude with certainty that in the kingdom of Christ, which was to be in the highest degree adapted for man, they would not be continued longer than was necessary.

That the supernatural action was in active operation, not only at the beginning of the apostolic age, but especially as the Church was extending itself among the Gentiles, and developing itself into its permanent forms under these new conditions of its life, we have seen as we have examined the history. On the other hand

a comparison of the later writings of the apostles with the earlier clearly indicates, that the supernatural powers held but for a short time that prominence in the Church which they attained for example at Corinth, when the epistles were written. They are not mentioned in the pastoral epistles as forming any part whatever of the Church system. Without therefore entering into the question whether any miracles, as exceptional and occasional testimonies to the truth, occurred after the apostolic age, we may conclude, both from *a priori* reasoning and from the history, that the supernatural action of the Spirit was exercised merely for the purpose of establishing the Church in its completeness, and that it gradually died away as the permanent order of the Church became developed, and as the truth, by which the world was to be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, was fully revealed and expounded. The Church, which is the body of Jesus Christ, was first formed through the supernatural agency of the Spirit; but being formed it was to grow, through the power of the spiritual forces which it contains, according to the universal laws of development. The Genesis of the Church, like that of the physical universe, was effected not without divine interposition; but, when all things were constituted in order, creative acts were no longer needed.

We are now prepared to examine the subject of the present chapter, the relation between spiritual gifts and the permanent order of the Church, with less risk of drawing false conclusions than would have attended our inquiry without these preliminary considerations. The fact which presents itself to us, both in the history of the apostolic Church and in the writings of the apostles, is this; that besides that organisa-

tion of the Church, which grew, as it were, naturally out of its institution by Christ Himself, and of the powers committed to His apostles, there were superadded developments, not proceeding through this channel, but coming directly from the Holy Spirit, and the result of His supernatural or miraculous action. The most eminent instance of this was the apostolate of Paul and Barnabas. The order of prophets, who are ranked by St Paul himself next to apostles, is another instance. With regard to the first of these, it is sufficient to observe that the apostleship, created by the supernatural interposition of the Holy Ghost, was proved by incontrovertible evidence to be co-ordinate with that which was derived otherwise from Jesus Christ, and there was but one apostolic office. But, as regards the prophets and others who were supernaturally qualified to exercise functions in the Church, the case was different. We find, side by side, presbyters of the Churches, ordained by the apostles as pastors and teachers, and no less certainly appointed by the Holy Ghost than if they had been appointed under the supernatural direction of the Spirit;—and others, who by virtue of their supernatural gifts exercised somewhat similar functions. Now we may observe first that these latter constituted no breach in the fixed order of the Church, being, notwithstanding their supernatural gifts, subject to apostolic authority. "If any man," St Paul says, "have the reputation of being a prophet "or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge the things "which I write unto you, that they are the Lord's "commands." Moreover, they were so far outside the order of the Church, that when those are assembled, who have authority in the Church to decide controversies, they are not "the apostles and prophets," but "the

" apostles and presbyters." Nor is there anything to prove, that the possession of spiritual gifts, such as those of a prophet, invested a man with a spiritual charge such as that which was committed to presbyters. Yet it must be observed on the other hand, that the qualification which were supernaturally given to prophets,—and again such as are implied by St Paul in the term governments, (κυβερνήσεις) administrative faculties, and the like,—are the very qualifications which would be required for the ordinary office of the presbyter, as described in the pastoral epistles and elsewhere. And the fact of these powers being received supernaturally would be in itself an evidence to those to whom they were thus given, and to the Church, that they had the authority of the Spirit for exercising such functions. In such cases therefore, there was a kind of office given by the Holy Spirit to the spiritually-gifted person, not by the mere possession of certain qualifications, but by the fact of his having received them supernaturally, with sufficient evidence of the action of supernatural power.

We find then, on the one hand, in the permanent order of the Church derived through the apostles, offices, for the fulfilment of the duties of which certain powers and qualifications are required: on the other hand, as temporary and exceptional results of the extraordinary action of the Spirit, persons supernaturally gifted, more or less, with these very powers and qualifications. The latter our previous investigations must lead us to regard as temporary aid given to the Church during this period, and as supplying examples and instances of the powers, which those, who held the permanent offices, would receive from the Spirit, not without means sufficient to produce such attainments,

but in the use of such means. For the appointment by the Holy Ghost to an office for which certain qualifications are required implies a right to that action of the Spirit, which is permanent in the Church according to Christ's word, and by which, through causes suited to produce such effects, the qualifications are obtained. Thus the prophets and others, who exercised certain functions in the Church by virtue of the gifts supernaturally received, gradually were absorbed into the permanent organisation of the Church, as the miraculous element which proved their origin gradually ceased: they melted away, on the one hand into those particular offices for which such powers, attained by the ordinary action of the Spirit, were suitable; on the other hand, into those numberless cases in the Church of all ages, in which human powers and attainments, consecrated to God by the Holy Spirit, may be used for the edification of the brethren and the glory of God, without any definite appointment to office, and also without any disturbance of the due order of the Church, which is however bound to give free scope and margin for the exercise of all spiritual gifts in the service of Christ.

This view of the relation of the spiritual gifts to the permanent order of the Church is abundantly confirmed by St Paul's pastoral epistles, in which are fully described the qualifications necessary for the Christian ministry, to which alone are assigned the functions temporarily exercised by prophets and others. These epistles we must examine carefully hereafter. But there is a passage in the First Epistle of St John which deserves attention in reference to this question. There is every reason to suppose that, when that epistle was written, miraculous gifts were no longer common in the Church, and also that the permanent order of the

Church was being largely developed among those whom St John addressed. However the Spirit of God did not cease to work, because those evidences of supernatural power which at first authenticated the prophets' teaching were passing away; He still was inspiring men to testify to the truth of Christ. But, the apostle says,* "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but "try the spirits whether they be of God, because many "false prophets have gone out into the world." And how were the latter to be distinguished? They might exhibit all the signs of a prophet, in their gifts, their apparently profound wisdom, their insight into mysteries, their spiritual power; and yet be wolves in sheep's clothing. But this was the certain test. "Every "spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ, come in the flesh, "is of God; and every spirit that doth not confess "Jesus Christ, come in the flesh, is not of God." We must therefore conclude, that whilst no appearance of spiritual power must induce Christians to recognise those as, in any sense, divinely sent prophets, who do not hold the true faith as to the incarnation of Jesus Christ,—for this is the very foundation of the Church; on the other hand when those, who possess the qualifications of the prophet, use their powers to set forth the true faith as to Jesus Christ, we are bound to recognise such a spiritual power as being of God. Such spiritual gifts do not make that man an apostle, or invest him with any of the authority in the Church derived from apostles; they do not justify him in interfering with the order and offices of the Church, much less in forming a separate society and calling it by his own name. But whatever powers in a man testify to Jesus Christ, come in the flesh, are and must be of the

* 1 John, iv. 1-3.

Spirit of Christ. For no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost. It is the office of the Church to control and direct such gifts,—for St Paul says of them, "The spirits of the prophets are subject "to the prophets," and "let all things be done decently "and in order;"—but it is no less its duty to encourage and foster, not impede by unnecessary restraints, the exercise of spiritual powers. "Would that all the "Lord's people were prophets and that He spake by "them."*

The general subject however of the relation of spiritual gifts to the order of the Church is intimately connected with the subject of the following chapter, in which some points on which I have here but briefly touched, will be more fully investigated.

* See Part II. Chap. V., pp. 107-110.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST.

THE truth that the Christian society is in some sense the body of Christ, is one the principal elements of which we have already discovered in the teaching of Jesus Himself. He had taught that wherever two or three should be gathered into His name there His Presence would be: that His disciples should be one, by being in Him, and by His indwelling in them. In the parable of the vine He represented His Church as subsisting in Himself, His disciples bearing fruit only by abiding in Him. The dependence of the whole Church on Him, and its deriving spiritual life only from Him,—which is the fundamental idea of the truth that the Church is His body,—were already distinctly revealed. And we have found also many indications of the interest which all the society has in the functions of each of its members, and of offices being instituted as representative organs, so that those who hold them act not for themselves but for the Church. Church life is corporate life: and what we mean by corporate life is, as the expression indicates, life like that of a body. But we must not forget that this is modern phraseology. Although the ancients not unfrequently illustrated social and political fellowships, and their action, by comparisons taken from the human body,

and although some of the analogies discussed by them, as by Plato in his Republic, are almost identical with those which the apostle Paul uses in his teaching, yet the idea was by no means one with which the mind of antiquity was familiar. Our familiarity with that use of the word body, which is in a great measure due to Christian thought and feeling, somewhat obscures the force of St Paul's language, when, in treating of this subject, he employs terms with which different ideas were originally associated from those which the corresponding words in modern languages immediately call to our minds. In Greek, the word σῶμα, and all its derivatives, referred exclusively to the physical nature of man or animals; it was the *body* as distinguished from the soul, and even from the life which animates the body; and although sometimes used figuratively to represent the whole of anything, (as Plato and others speak of τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κόσμου,) yet always, it would seem, with reference to an outward material frame. The Romans used *corpus* in a somewhat wider sense, which enlarged under the influence of Roman law, and subsequently of Christian thought; yet even this differed greatly from our modern use. And St Paul was not writing to Romans or in Latin, but to Greeks in Greek, when he said to the Corinthians, "In one Spirit were we all bap-" tised into one *body.*" Indeed, although the elements of the truth, as I have observed, were originally taught by Jesus Himself, yet unless St Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had fully expounded this truth of the Church being the body of Christ, we certainly could not have ventured to do more than use it as an illustration; we could not have done, what his teaching enables us to do, employed it as a root truth, from which we may freely and confidently draw the conclusions

to which it points. In fact, we may (I think) distinctly trace the growth of the truth in the apostle's own teaching. At first he uses it cautiously by way of illustration; then, feeling the ground sure, and knowing it to be more than a mere figure of speech, he deduces from it many inferences. At a later period of his life he carries it up, with all the confidence of spiritual knowledge, into the highest sphere of the mysteries of divine truth.

The fullest exhibition of the truth in the earlier writings of the apostle is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. He also incidentally touches on it in his Epistle to the Romans, but there only by way of analogy to enforce practical duties. In writing to Greek Christians, he sets forth the truth much in detail. He first (in the tenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians) connects it with the common participation of the Eucharistic bread, which is the communion of the body of Christ. "We, being many, are one bread and "one body; for we all partake of the one bread." It is clear that there was present to the apostle's mind not merely what we understand by a spiritual fellowship. He had before reminded these Corinthians that their bodies were members of Christ, and therefore not to be defiled by sin. Now he says that all Christians are one body, which is not, it must be remembered, merely one spiritual fellowship: as I have observed, we cannot connect that idea with the original use of the word σῶμα; he means that we are formed into a visible and material whole,—a body as distinguished from spirit,—by the bread which is our fellowship with the body of Christ broken on the cross. The truth thus springs out of the fundamental faith that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, to which flesh the bodies of Christians become re-

lated by a sacramental act. From this question of the Lord's Supper St Paul passes on to speak of the spiritual gifts among Christians, which he gradually connects with the same truth. First he uses the truth merely as an analogy, illustrating our mutual relations in Christ. The gifts of the Spirit were (he argues) distributed to each man differently according to the will of the Spirit. "For just as (καθάπερ) the body," (that is, the material frame of man's body) "is one whole, and has many "members, but all the members of that body which is "one whole, many as they are, are but one body; so "also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptised "into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond "or free; and were all made to drink one Spirit."* And now, conscious that this of which he is speaking, —the Church being the body of Christ,—is not a mere metaphor, he proceeds to deal with it, not only as an illustration through which spiritual things may be more clearly exhibited, but as a reality, in which the spiritual truth so completely corresponds with the physical, that it cannot be otherwise fully expressed. When Jesus Christ compares His Church to a vine, it is a metaphor; the correspondence is not real and complete enough for us to speak of the Church as God's vine without further explanation. But that the Church is the body of Christ is so complete a form of truth, that other truths may be derived from it. And this for two reasons indicated by St Paul; the one, already noticed, that Christians have communion with the natural body of Jesus Christ which was crucified; the other, which appears more distinctly in the argument that follows, that the human body is, in nature, the highest type of organic life. No other analogy could sufficiently express at the same

* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

time the nearness of the relation of the Church to Christ, and the organic life of the Church.

This life the apostle now proceeds to explain from the constitution of the natural body. There are several distinct conclusions which he draws consecutively. First, we learn from the body, that the great variety of the functions and powers of the different members does not prevent them from being all parts of the same whole.* Again, this variety is necessary, because otherwise all the functions required for the body would not be performed.† And further, there must be distinction or, in the language of modern science, differentiation of functions, because if all the several parts were the same member, if all the functions were performed by every part equally, where would be the body itself, the organic structure?‡ In the lower forms of organic life, indeed, we find almost every part capable of performing many functions at the same time, but such a low type of organisation is not suited for the body of reasonable man, and cannot be that of the Church, Christ's body. And further, the benefit and moral value of this organic structure of the Church may be seen in the mutual interdependence of all the members, one on the other. The feeblest is necessary to the strongest, and even those which we account unseemly are as essential as the most comely and noblest members, and indeed receive more attention and honour, being clothed and decorated; so that, according to the appointment of God who made the body, there is a compensation in its several parts.§ And the design and the effect of this tempering of all the members in one organic whole is unity; every member feeling with every other, both

* 1 Cor. xii. 14-16.
† Vv. 17, 18.
‡ Vv. 19, 20.
§ Vv. 21-24.

because of the common life which circulates through the body, and also because the welfare of each part is the welfare of the body. They cannot be separated. In the suffering of one part the body suffers; in the joy of one part the body rejoices.* And since this is true of organic life in the natural body of man, it is true of the Church: "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Before we inquire further into the meaning of this remarkable parallel, we must first observe that there is one fundamental distinction, in the very nature of things, between symbols taken from the physical world, however legitimate and perfect, and the spiritual things themselves. In the natural world the materials are natural, that is, they are the subjects of fixed law, and the effects produced are necessary sequences. In the natural body, unless the organisation is impaired, one member cannot but feel an injury done to another member; and all fulfil their functions of necessity, being, unless mortified or paralysed, obedient to the will, the presiding spirit, of the man. But, in a body the members of which are men, there cannot be any such necessary sequence in the organic life of causes and effects, since other causes independent of the organism may and do originate in the human will itself. Indeed, the mystery of the will meets us whenever we attempt to look below the surface of any question touching the Church; and as a mystery we must leave it, and not suppose we shall make matters any the clearer by attempting to solve that which to finite reason is insoluble. All that concerns us to know, in regard to religious and moral questions, is,—first, that the fact of man being responsible, of conscience and duty, morality

* 1 Cor. xii. 25-27.

and religion, being realities to him, proves that there must be in him a will which in some sense or other is a self-determining power,—that is, which cannot be overborne by external influences or motives; and secondly, that, nevertheless, a will undetermined by motives is inconceivable to us, and experience proves that influences and motives do govern the action of the will —if it were not so, it would be impossible in any degree to foresee what human actions would be.

Keeping in mind then the necessary distinction between such an organism as that of the human body, and one in which the units, of which the whole is composed, are distinct personalities; and remembering that the action of the latter organism can only be through the concurrence of will with will, and is not merely dynamical, that is an action of power; we may proceed to investigate the meaning of the apostle's language so far as it bears on our argument. And here again we need not imagine that St Paul had present to his mind any philosophical theories, nor need we introduce any such into the interpretation of his words. But so far as philosophy consists in discerning and truly setting forth facts within the range of human knowledge, without speculating on them, so far was philosophy necessary to the apostle himself in order justly to conceive and truly to apply this parallel; and it is necessary for us also in the interpretation, unless we would wholly misunderstand his meaning. We know, for example, that the threefold distinction in man of spirit, soul, and body (πνεῦμα, ψυχή, σῶμα), was not only one with which St Paul's mind was familiar, but one which he assumes in dealing with many doctrinal questions. With any theories, ancient or modern, as to the difference and relations between

these, we have no concern, nor had St Paul; for example, it does not really affect the question, whether we believe that the ψυχή, the vital principle, is somewhat independent of the material organism, or whether we consider it as the ἀρχή out of which the organism has been evolved, or whether, in the language of modern physiology, we call it "the dynamical condition of the organism;"—which after all is nothing more than a confession of the inability of the human mind, when it follows the organism up to its primary elements, to distinguish between the forces which maintain the subsistence of these elements, and those which govern their mutual relations. But all we need for the interpretation of the apostle's language is to grasp the distinctions present to his mind, which, however they may be defined or accounted for, are real distinctions, and have a corresponding reality in the two existences which he compares, the body of a man and the body of Christ. In the former case, there is first of all the material organism, created by God, in its due form and with its proper organs, so constructed as to be suited for certain functions. Secondly, there is the life, the ψυχή, which empowers the organs to perform their functions, and without which the most perfect adaptation of an organ to its proper use will not enable it to be so used,—as for example the exquisite mechanism of the eye is ineffectual without vitality. Thirdly, there is in man a higher life, the life of reason or spirit, through which a rational use is made of the functions of the body.

This threefold distinction was evidently here, as elsewhere, present to the apostle's mind; indeed as the comparison was, as I have said, not a mere figure of speech, but the tracing of real correspondences, it could

not have been otherwise. Now, in the Church, the highest life is that which St Paul describes in the thirteenth chapter, the life of love, which alone enables us to use aright the spiritual gifts of the body; but in order to prevent confusion of thought, we must keep this quite distinct from the question of the organic life, from which indeed, as I have noticed in the last chapter, it is expressly distinguished by St Paul himself. We have, for the present, only to consider the correspondence in regard to the σῶμα of man, and his ψυχή. We may at once discern, that, answering to these, there are in the Church,—first its organic structure, its external form, fitted for certain functions;—secondly the powers which its members receive of fulfilling their several functions. But we must examine this more closely in order to perceive both the distinction between these, and their mutual relation. First of all we must observe, that the σῶμα itself, and its various organs, are determined and limited by that of which the senses are capable of judging. Baptism and the Eucharistic bread, with the confession which accompanies them that Jesus is the Christ, are referred to by the apostle, as the outward and visible instruments for forming and maintaining the body. But, just so far as these acts have in them any reality, so far they are not a mere outward form, but they embody a vital principle. For, St Paul says, "no man can say "that Jesus is the Christ,"—make the most elementary confession of faith,—"but by the Holy Ghost." The elementary faith, which we find represented in the teaching of the fourth Gospel, as the first beginning of spiritual life, is not of the unaided understanding of man, but is of the Spirit of God. Again, in the constitution of the various members of the body of Christ, we find the

same distinction, between the functions which they are appointed and adapted to perform, and the vital powers which enable them to perform these functions, between the organic structure and the vital power. The Twelve were first appointed to their apostolic office, afterwards by the outpouring of the Spirit they were empowered to perform its functions. The Seven were ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands; by the Spirit they were enabled to fulfil, as Stephen and Philip fulfilled, the duties of their office. St Paul's formal separation was by the laying on of hands at Antioch; the powers, by which his office was fulfilled, were the proofs of the vital action of the Spirit. In all these we trace very clearly the distinction between the ἔργον, the work committed to the man, the functions of the member,—and the δύναμις, the power by which the member fulfils his office. But what shall we say of those supernatural gifts, which, abounding as they did in the Corinthian Church at that time, were one principal subject of the teaching of the apostle, who was not dealing with some abstract theory as to the body of Christ, but with the actual state of those to whom he was writing? He is, we find, specially anxious to mark both the subordination of all to the apostolic office, and the due order amongst these gifts. But were these simply powers to perform functions, without any office to which the functions belonged? If so the analogy of the organism of the body would wholly fail. We have seen however in the former chapter, that the supernatural elements in these gifts were a sufficient external evidence of functions being assigned to those who possessed them, and thus constituted an office or at least a quasi-office for such persons; and though such offices were only suited for a transition state of the Church,

and did not belong to its permanent order, yet whilst they lasted they were a part of its organic structure, and all the principles which we have investigated are equally applicable to them.

Thus then in the Church we have, 1st, the organism, determined and constituted by some external signs or instruments, which is the body,—τὸ σῶμα,—in the strictest sense; 2dly, the vital energy of the Spirit supplying the powers to the various organs to perform their functions; 3dly, the higher and most truly spiritual life of love, corresponding with the rational life of man enabling him to use all the powers of the body aright. But we must observe that all these three are of the Spirit of God. The apostle elsewhere, in a passage which we shall consider presently, ascribes to the Holy Ghost the ordinary and permanent offices of the Church, no less than those which were determined by His supernatural gifts; and he reminds the presbyters of the Ephesian Church that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers of the flock of God. Indeed by one Spirit are we baptised into one body. All are of Him; and although it be true that offices, separate from the power he supplies to enable men to fulfil them, are but dead members; and further that the best gifts without the higher life of love are worthless to a man; yet to set one of these parts of the new man against the other, and to disparage the organic structure, as if it were not necessary for the purposes for which it is ordained, is no true spiritual wisdom.

For, further, this is *the body of Christ.* St Paul expressly teaches this in the Epistle to the Corinthians, but in a subsequent epistle, entitled to the Ephesians, he carries on this truth, as I have before observed, into a far higher sphere than that of the mutual relations of

Christians one to another, and it will be necessary therefore that we should test the meaning of the truth a little further, in order that we may follow the apostle with unfaltering steps. For it appears to many devout and earnest Christians, that although this symbol may be used, somewhat indefinitely and generally, of the whole Christian society, when the question is as to the mutual relations and responsibilities of Christians, yet when St Paul proceeds to speak of the Church in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as His body, we cannot, without a dangerous confusion of spiritual realities and external forms, or even without irreverence and impiety, understand this body of any but that which is called in modern theology the invisible Church of Christ. Now that many are called, but few chosen; that many are outwardly and visibly in the kingdom, who in spirit have not entered into it; that a Church may have a name to live, while it is dead; that we may have all the blessings of the kingdom in our hands, yet not enjoy them; are most certain truths. But we shall gain nothing for the confirmation of these truths, but shall only weaken them, by a confused and untrue interpretation of the language of the great apostle. And there can be no greater confusion of ideas, than to use the word *body* of that in which all the distinctive properties of body, in our present state of existence, are entirely wanting. All St Paul's Greek readers must have understood by σῶμα an outward material frame, as distinguished from that which is unseen and only the subject of thought; and yet he is by many now supposed to mean by the body of Christ, a society without any form belonging to it to make it manifest, the limits and extent of which are concealed in the infinite knowledge of God,—a body

without any organic structure, at least with none the existence and action of which are externally determined. In fact, by thus changing the concrete reality which the apostle had present to his own mind, into a mere abstract ideal, a body without the properties of body, a substance without accidents, we really miss the most important points in St Paul's arguments. But to clear our minds further on this subject, we will consider the truth in some other aspects, although in so doing we must advance further into the regions of pure faith and doctrine than is absolutely necessary to our argument.

It must be observed that the body, which the apostle has in his mind in comparing it with the Church, is not some spiritual or glorified body, but the natural body of man, with its unseemliness and dishonour, needing to be clothed to conceal its shame. Many, when they hear of the body of Christ, at once imagine of it as something perfect and glorious, as if it would be a dishonour to the Son of God that His body should be any other. But such persons can hardly have sufficiently apprehended in their minds the meaning and reality of the incarnation. It was not a glorious body that the eternal Word assumed when He was made flesh, but "God sent His own Son in the likeness of "the flesh of sin"—that is, in a real human body, with none of the personal taint of sin, but with the infirmity, dishonour, and suffering which sin has entailed on the body of man. And now, although He is personally exalted above all things that He may fill all, yet His body, the Church, that organisation of redeemed humanity which is to Him now what His natural body was to Him in the days of His flesh,—so far as a whole, in which there are distinct personalities, can corre-

spond with that in which the personality is the same,—is not exalted or glorified except in Him. It is of the same nature as other human organisations and societies except in this, that its origin is divine, and that it is in as intimate relation with the glorified Redeemer as it is possible for any human society to be. There is in it indeed a divine glory and power which the spiritual mind can discern; but its very imperfections and unseemlinesses testify to the condescension of the Lord of glory, who takes a society of us sinful men, with such relations as are necessary to form among men any social organisation, as His very body. Those, who suppose this body of Jesus Christ to be an invisible ideal, have yet to learn the full value of the truth, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

But, further we may, by the aid of this truth, distinguish the difference between the Church of Christ and every other human society, in regard to their origin. All human society is of God, although it may proceed from, and be formed by, the natural instincts of humanity; even as the natural body of man is the creature of God, by whatever physical laws it may be developed. But that human society, which is the Church of Christ, God formed by His Spirit, not according to mere natural laws, but even as the body of Jesus Christ was formed by the Holy Ghost of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His mother. Yet, in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, not some preternatural form was produced, but that which according to nature is the body of man. Although that holy thing which was conceived was the Son of God, yet it was real human flesh and blood, a body growing out of the same elements, by the same organic laws, during the same period, as other human bodies.

Whatever in its origin was above the laws of nature, yet in its subsistence as a body there was nothing preternatural; it was indeed essential to the incarnation that He should be in all things made like unto His brethren: and so must it also be in this body of Christ which His Church is. It did not spring out of the natural instincts and powers of man; the divine power of the Holy Ghost quickened the life in it, and by His supernatural gifts formed it into its proper shape and fashion; but He made it of the substance of our humanity, of flesh and blood, of the qualities and faculties which belong to man's nature, and not of something portentous and unnatural. And this body, being once constituted as a real human society by this preternatural action, does not require action of the same kind for its further growth. Indeed, as we have before concluded from other considerations, the continuance of such miraculous interposition would hinder instead of furthering the purpose of its institution. This was that it should be a real society of men amongst men, not turning stones into bread for its own support in the wilderness, but sustained by faith in the Word of God, and proving to men the power of faith in the absence of external aids and signs from heaven to confirm it.

Being then assured that the body of Christ is nothing imaginary or unsubstantial, but real flesh and blood, an organised society among men, we may now carry on the truths, which we have learnt from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, into the higher sphere of thought which is opened to us in later writings of St Paul. The Epistle to the Colossians and that entitled "To the "Ephesians,"—which was probably an encyclical letter to the Christians in the Asiatic Churches of which

Ephesus was the metropolis,—were written some six or seven years after the epistles to the Corinthians. During this period the truth of the Church being the body of Christ evidently became more familiar to the apostle's own mind. It has now passed wholly out of the region of mere metaphor into that of spiritual realities. It is no longer, "*as* the body hath many members, "*so* also is Christ;" but Christ "is the Head of the "body the Church;" from Him "the whole body by "means of its joints and bands being supplied and knit "together groweth the growth of God." We must however turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians, which was apparently the later of the two, for the most complete development of the truth.

There is much of the language of the epistle as to the relations of the Church to Jesus Christ,—who on His ascension was constituted Head over all things to His Church which is His own body,—which it would carry us too far into questions of abstract spiritual truth to discuss. St Paul reminds the Ephesians that the unity of the Church as the body of Christ is founded in the one sacrifice for sin: Jew and Gentile being in Christ made one, one new man, as reconciled *in one body* to God through the cross. This, which before had seemed impossible, it was the special vocation of St Paul first to affirm distinctly, and it was revealed to all Christ's holy apostles and prophets by His Spirit, that the Gentiles were to be not only fellow-heirs of salvation, but fellow-members of a body (σύνσωμα.) The apostle here, in his earnest desire to give emphasis to the truth, coins, or at least uses, a strange if not somewhat barbarous word to express it. In this fellowship, the body of Jesus Christ, and not in the fellowship of

the carnal Israel, were the Gentiles to be partakers of God's promises in Christ through the Gospel.

But it is in the apostle's exhortation to unity in the fourth chapter of this epistle, that the truth is unfolded into forms which are of the utmost value in our inquiry as to the laws of development of the Christian Church. He begins by reminding them that unity is, so to speak, the key-note of the Christian life. "*One* body, and *one* "Spirit,—even as also ye were called in *one* hope of "your calling; *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism; *one* "God and Father of all, He who is over all and through "all and in all." But this oneness in the body, is (they must remember) the union of many differing parts in one whole, and each must be content to perform his own proper functions. "For to each one of us was "given the grace, according to the measure of the free "gift of Christ." And the apostle explains that he means, "given on the ascension of Christ:" and by "the "grace," not what modern theology understands by the word, a spiritual influence on the mind, nor yet merely some supernatural gifts of the Spirit—though these are included,—but generally the gift of the functions, with their powers, (both the ἔργον and the δύναμις) by which the Church is constituted and organised. He did not appoint all to the same office, or endue them with the same powers. But "He gave some (to be) apostles; others, "prophets; others, evangelists; others, pastors and "teachers." We must observe here that those whose office was instituted by Jesus Christ Himself, and those to whom functions were assigned by supernatural power, and also those who are appointed to the ordinary ministry of the Church, are all classed together, although according to their due order, yet as being equally the

result of the ascension of Jesus Christ and of the outpouring of His Spirit. We may notice also that during the six or seven years since the apostle wrote to the Corinthians the supernatural offices are gradually passing away, and the permanent order of the Church is taking its place.

But, further, the purposes and effects of this organisation of the body of Christ are explained with much exactness by the apostle, and in these we shall find the solution of some very necessary questions, to which as yet we have obtained no sufficient answer in apostolic teaching. The true nature of the unity of the Spirit, which is to be held in the bond (συνδέσμῳ) of peace, is expounded here as nowhere else in Holy Scripture. The words of St Paul (iv. 11-16) literally rendered, are as follows. He says that Christ gave the several offices of the ministry in the Church "with a view to "the perfecting of the saints, for work of ministry, for "building up of the body of Christ; until we shall "come, all of us, to the unity of the faith and of the "full knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, "to the measure of stature of fulness of Christ; that "we may be no longer babes, tossed like waves and "driven about by every wind of teaching, in the "sleight of men, in cunning craftiness working for the "scheming of error; but being true in love, may grow "up unto Him in all things, who is the Head, even "Christ; from whom all the body, being fitted to-"gether and compacted through every joint of supply, "according to the active working in due measure of "every single part, produces the growth of the body "unto the building up of itself in love."

It will be observed that the apostle here indicates a twofold unity. There is first unity of the faith; as he

had before said—"one faith, one baptism"—and this certainly cannot mean anything else than that the substance of that which is believed is one and the same; and then unity of the developed knowledge (ἐπιγνώσεως) of the Son of God. And this twofold unity corresponds with the twofold purpose of the Christian ministry as marked out by Christ Himself in the commission given to the apostles, which was first that they should make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; secondly, that they should teach the disciples all that they had received from Him.

(1.) It is evident that Jesus Christ's own words define the One Faith as that which is contained in the Divine Name into which men are to be baptised. The faith involved in that Name, being necessary to baptism, is therefore required for admission into the one body, which is thus limited and determined. But it will be remembered that this One Faith was from time to time expressed in different forms. In the confession of St Peter, which Christ Himself declared to be the fundamental faith of His Church, it was expressed in the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living "God." In the preaching of the apostles it appears as "Jesus and the resurrection." St Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians expounds it as being, "that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, "and that He was buried, and that He rose again, "according to the Scriptures." St John in his epistles sums it up in the words "Jesus is the Christ," or "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." Now in all these it is evident, first that in each the baptismal faith is virtually implied, and then that not one is more than such an expansion or explanation of this faith as

may be necessary in order to enable men truly to receive it. But it may be asked, since all true knowledge of the Son of God must be an outgrowth from the one fundamental faith, how are we to distinguish between the one faith and that knowledge which is derived from it? The attempt to distinguish between fundamentals and non-fundamentals, if by the one is intended what is necessary to be believed, and by the other what is indifferent,—is evidently a vain and fruitless task; for everything is necessary to be believed, which we learn through the teaching of the Spirit. But if we mean by fundamentals, those foundation or root truths out of which Christian doctrine is to be evolved, there is no such difficulty. For we must exclude from these all mere inferences or deductions, but must include in them both the facts involved in this truth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and such explanations as are required for its complete exposition. The explanations however must be only those which we learn from divine revelation. Because no truths lying out of the reach of the human understanding can receive any such explanation as can be an article of faith, from the conclusions of the understanding. We are assured that the form in which such truth is presented to our mind by the Spirit of God Himself is a legitimate symbol and expression of this truth; but when any addition is made to this by the human understanding, with the view of making it more intelligible, we have no assurance that it is any explanation at all.

Nor indeed, if an explanation were deducible from Holy Scripture itself, could we at once conclude that it ought to be a part of the elementary faith, "the word "of the beginning of Christ," the "teaching of bap-

" tism and of laying on of hands," intended for the children of the kingdom. The process through which the developed knowledge of the Son of God is attained requires, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, spiritual perceptions which have been quickened and strengthened by use. The one faith must be " the sincere milk of the word," and not strong meat for them who are of full age.

We conclude then that for the " One Faith " it is essential

First, That every article in it should be merely the expansion of the faith contained in " the Name of the " Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost ; " or, in other words, in " Jesus being the Christ the Son of God."

Secondly, That every article should be a root truth, that is, one out of which other truths may be developed.

Thirdly, That every article should be an expansion of the faith, not made by human reasoning, but expressly revealed, that is, contained in Holy Scripture.

Fourthly, Every article must be an elementary truth, and not one of those for which a cultivated and matured knowledge is necessary.

The preceding considerations sufficiently indicate the value, if not the necessity, for the oneness of the faith, of some common form in which those elementary articles of belief, which are necessary and sufficient for the one faith, shall be summed up. For without such a common form there are dangers to unity on both sides. First there is no security that there is a confession that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, unless the truth be so far expanded in human language and the forms of human thought, as to exclude those interpretations of it which deny the sense which the words are intended to bear. But, on the other hand, such a

form is no less necessary in order to exclude any additions to the one faith, for additions to the faith destroy the unity of the body. Because, in order that there may be unity between all the parts of the body, it is first of all essential that one part shall not require as necessary to admission into the body, that which, in substance at least, another part does not require;—otherwise the one part would be to the other not of the body. Therefore all such additions are in themselves a schism or dividing of the body, wherever they are required for communion. It is evident that this amounts to the same as saying that the faith must be *Catholic*. The Catholic faith is that which is necessary and sufficient for the one faith. Unity and Catholicity are only different aspects of the same principle.

Nor is there any difficulty in determining how the one or Catholic faith is to be defined. As Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to make men disciples and to baptise into the Triune name, that is to form and constitute His body, this commission involves of necessity authority in them to determine what is the faith included in that name, for Jesus Christ did not commission them to use a mere form of words without meaning. Unity in this faith therefore must be attained by unity of action among those who are thus commissioned. We might draw the same conclusion from the language of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which declares that the object of the institution of the ministry is, first of all, unity in the faith. But indeed the precedent which we have already considered, of the Council at Jerusalem, is directly to the purpose. For the question then decided was, as regards the unity of the body, even more fundamental than that of the faith; for it was whether faith and baptism

were sufficient to constitute men members of the body and heirs of the promises, or whether circumcision and the Mosaical law were also required. And if the action of the Council were necessary and sufficient to decide that question, similar action must be necessary and sufficient for the question as to the form of the Catholic faith.*

(2.) But this indeed is but on the threshold, and touches only the verge, of the argument of St Paul in this passage. His own words, as well as the teaching of Jesus Christ, made it necessary that we should examine it; but the unity of the body of which he speaks is chiefly that more perfect unity of spirit which accompanies growth, this growth being, as he argues, the result of internal action within the body proceeding from Christ the Head. This unity we have observed is called by him the oneness of the full or developed knowledge (ἐπιγνώσεως) of the Son of God. For the right reception even of the most elementary truths of the faith spiritual knowledge is necessary. But knowledge, whenever it is real, grows in the mind, and that not by the mere accretion of other truths, but especially by the more complete assimilation of those which are already known, so that the very same form of truth has a different force and power, when it is first apprehended, and when it has developed itself in the spiritual consciousness. It is in this process of development of truth, that differences of judgment arise even amongst those who, as regards the elementary principles of the faith, are at one. But St Paul teaches us, that oneness, not only of faith, but also of this developed knowledge of Christ, is the true condition of Christian maturity. His language, however, needs to be

* See Note at the end of the Chapter.

carefully examined in order to avoid false conclusions from the premises.

We must observe then that the word ἐπιγνῶσις which he uses here, and oftentimes elsewhere, for the advanced knowledge of spiritual truth, is purely subjective; it is never used to express the things known, as faith often expresses the things believed, and sight the things seen, but it always means the perception, or recognition, by the mind itself. By the oneness of knowledge, therefore, we must here understand primarily the *same faculty of knowing*, even as oneness of vision would mean the same power of discerning truly the objects of vision. This implies indeed, that if the same objects are presented to the inner faculty, and if the same use is made of the same perceptions, the same results of knowledge will be acquired: this however is but a consequence of the oneness of the perception. It follows then, that even as oneness of vision cannot be produced merely by presenting the same objects to the sight, so neither can oneness of ἐπιγνῶσις be produced merely by uniformity in the subjects of knowledge. The dogmatic exposition of truth, therefore, will of itself afford no sufficient aid towards this unity of spiritual knowledge, since it only deals with the materials of knowledge; indeed the process by which the unity is to be attained, as here represented by St Paul, is something wholly different from dogmatic definition. Elsewhere he prays for the Ephesians that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει) of Him. The oneness of ἐπιγνῶσις then must be produced, so far as human agency is concerned, by the cultivation of the spiritual perceptions in such a manner and by such means as are provided for this end. In the passage before us this process, as

resulting from the mutual action of the various members of the body, is described by St Paul with almost scientific exactness. The unity is the result of growth, by the building up of the body in truth and love, through the instrumentality of the various offices of the ministry ordained by Christ, each of which is a joint of the supply, and through the vital action and reaction of all the members one on the other, according to the function of each; the effect being that those who were children in Christ grow up in this process to the maturity and strength of manhood.

That however, which it specially concerns our argument to notice here, is that the development of knowledge, and the unity of knowledge, contemplated by St Paul, are not, either in themselves or in the method by which they are attained, anything inconsistent with the free exercise of the human reason in its own sphere, or contradictory to the true development of man as a reasonable being,—anything that makes the Church any the less a real human organisation, which would be the case if the laws of its growth interfered with the due use of man's rational faculties. A society, which should have laws of thought imposed upon it different from those which are common to man, could not be the true Body of the Son of Man. It is of the utmost consequence, therefore, to a true conception of the argument of St Paul as to the Church, that we should ascertain how it touches this question. Now we observe that St Paul here and elsewhere, and other apostles also in their writings, attribute departures from the truth of Christ to two causes. The first of these is the mental vision being obscured by some fleshly or worldly affections, by the love of gain or of self-glory, by sensual lusts, or generally by the absence

of charity, or love to God and man. The other cause of error arises from Christians being children and not growing up to manhood. The first of these causes all will admit to be a real hindrance to the free exercise of the reason in man on any question, moral or religious, touching himself; nor will any accuse the Christian of wishing to usurp a tyranny over human thought, because he seeks to have these obstacles to a free and unbiassed judgment removed from the minds of men. But it is often objected that a more fatal impediment than any of these still remains, if men are to be bound to a system of doctrine which is to be passively received. St Paul, however, in this passage, sufficiently obviates this objection. He does not attribute departures from the truth, as some might expect that he would, to men not being passive recipients of Christian doctrine; but, on the contrary, to their not growing up out of the condition of childhood—that of passive and implicit faith—into that of manhood, that of judgment and knowledge. The infancy of the Christian life is exposed to great dangers, for this reason, he says, that it is liable to yield to influences from without, to be driven to and fro, as a wave of the sea by changing winds, through the pressure upon the mind of the teaching of others. He is here, indeed, speaking of the teaching of those who from some corrupt motive or other perverted the Gospel; but the danger, in St Paul's estimation, arises from the incapacity to discriminate teaching, whoever be the teacher. Elsewhere he said to the Corinthians—"I speak as unto wise men; "judge ye what I say;" and to the Thessalonians, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (τὸ καλόν). This is not the language of a man who would bring the intellects of others in subjection to mere

authority; but of one who, confident in the power of truth, knows that it is more secure in proportion as the capacities of judging are enlarged. It is true indeed that the ἐπιγνῶσις, which is cultivated in the Christian, is not the reasoning or logical faculty, but rather an intuitive perception of the fitness, goodness, and harmony of spiritual truths, which lie out of the region of the understanding of man; and it is therefore more nearly akin to the æsthetic perceptions, with which it is compared in a passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews* to which I have already referred, or to that insight into the harmonies and laws of nature, which in some minds anticipates, if it does not supersede, the ordinary processes of reasoning, rather than to a faculty which attains knowledge by discourse of reason. And as poetical genius, for example, may be in high perfection, although the logical faculties have been little cultivated, and a mathematician only deserves ridicule when he attempts to discover the laws of art from algebraic formulas; so will true Christian knowledge be often found in those who have little of the "wisdom of this "world," whilst this wisdom only impedes the perception of spiritual truth, if it applies to it tests that are inapplicable. And yet we do not suppose that true poetry is inconsistent with the laws of reason, because its laws cannot be determined by science. Christian knowledge, indeed, which is not a mere philosophical insight into profound truths, but which has to interpret them into the practical language of man's common life, eminently needs the understanding, as a trustworthy fellow-helper, without which aid its purposes cannot be fulfilled. "Brethren," St Paul says, "be "not children in your understandings (ταῖς φρεσίν); in

* Heb. v. 13, 14.

" malignity be very babes, but in your understandings " be full-grown men."

Those therefore who would use the constitution and ministries of Christ's Church as instruments for bringing the intellect of man under bondage, and those on the other side who represent them as having that tendency, have both wholly falsified that, in which, as the Body of Him in whom manhood is perfected, the real perfection of man's being will be found. The ministries ordained by Christ are for the cultivation of the powers of man, not for their repression: the unity that is to be attained through the action of the body, the Church, cannot be attained by the exercise of authority, but only by matured knowledge. But it may be asked, and indeed is not unfrequently asked, why, if the real purpose in the institution of the Church be the elucidation of truth, is there any objection to having the truth questioned, and what is considered to be error freely and boldly disseminated? For it is argued with great force in favour of the most perfect freedom of discussion, that "the complete liberty which there is of con- " tradicting and disproving an opinion is the very con- " dition which justifies us in assuming its truth for " purposes of action," and "he who knows only his " own side of the case" knows little of that. Whereas it is evident that, in the institution of the Christian ministry, the advancement of truth is contemplated, not by exhibiting the reasons on the other side, not by saying, *Audi alteram partem,* but simply by the manifestation of the truth itself. Jesus Christ Himself said not only, "Take heed how ye hear," but, "Take " heed *what* ye hear:" and the apostles were evidently jealous of what they considered to be false doctrines being taught among the disciples. But it must be re-

membered, that the arguments for freedom of discussion, just as they are with regard to some subjects of human thought, wholly fail in respect to others. Even in the exercise of the reasoning faculties, it is not always true that hearing the other side confirms our convictions of the truth. No one supposes that pure science would be best taught by such a method; for example, that our power of solving mathematical problems would be increased by studying erroneous solutions: on the contrary, we should almost certainly acquire through such a process some false mathematical conceptions. And generally, although for the solution of a question which has to be solved by the intellect of man, free discussion, and a thorough acquaintance with all that can be urged on both sides, are essential to assure us that we have attained the truth respecting it, yet a totally different process must be followed whenever any object of thought has to be apprehended by an intuitive or æsthetic perception. Art is not cultivated by the study of deformity and a chamber of horrors. Language is not learnt aright, — although some teachers used to think so,—from a debased style and imperfect grammar, but from the best and purest models. It is no interference with liberty of thought that Latin is learnt from Cicero rather than from Augustine, from Virgil and Ovid rather than from Prudentius. We all admit, in every branch of human knowledge in which perceptions, *αἰσθητήρια*, have to be cultivated, that those perceptions become blunted or vitiated by false standards, and the critical power itself must first be acquired by the study of that which is good and true, before it can so discriminate as to reject that which is evil and false. Therefore, even if the *ἐπιγνῶσις* in the Christian life were merely intellectual,

the danger of falsehood would be sufficiently apparent. But if, as the teaching of the New Testament abundantly proves, it is moral even more than it is intellectual, and the moral consciousness is specially necessary for its action, and if spiritual truth be the highest form of moral truth, whilst a departure from spiritual truth is always, implicitly, a departure from the true standard of moral right, we need not be surprised at the earnestness with which false teaching is deprecated. We know too well from experience, how quickly the moral consciousness becomes obscured by living in an atmosphere of falsehood or impurity.

If indeed the knowledge in which the Christian grows in the body of Christ were a moral or an æsthetic perception only, the presence of opposing doctrines could be merely injurious. But the very fact of its being a knowledge of truth proves, as I have before intimated, that it is in alliance with the reason and understanding of man, and so far as these have to be exercised, and conflicting opinions have to be critically tested, oppositions to the truth may lead to much clearer perception of its meaning. Especially, they are of great value ultimately,—whatever injury they may cause for the time,—in enabling us to distinguish the proper limits of the sphere of the human understanding in religious matters. They tend to prevent that narrowness of mind of which the chief, if not the only, cause is, that men are not content to receive spiritual truths by the ἐπιγνῶσις of which St Paul speaks, but will employ a pseudo-intellectual process in order to deduce from them conclusions utterly untrue.

It does not fall within my purpose to show further, how all these considerations as to the nature of spiritual knowledge affect the question of the supernatural

influences of the Spirit of truth on the mind of man, and prove that ample scope is left for these without any interference with the liberty of his judgment and will. That which concerns our argument is to notice, how they reconcile liberty of thought, and the responsibility of private judgment, with the legitimate exercise of authority in the Church in matters of faith and doctrine. The office of the Church through the ministries instituted by Jesus Christ is, first of all to set forth and teach the one faith, and this is simply that which has been received by revelation; then, to provide that in the Body the teaching shall be such as is calculated to build up all the members in truth and love, into the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God. This office must include the authority of condemning false conclusions from the one faith as well as perversions of that faith; and, especially, of preventing those who teach false doctrine from teaching it as members of the Body. For if the Church had not this authority its ministries would be used for a purpose contrary to that for which they are instituted: and those who affirm that one member may be allowed to do this, without the Church itself being responsible, must study St Paul's argument as to the Body of Christ in his Epistles to the Corinthians and Ephesians. It is mere waste of time to argue this point with those who have not grasped the first principles of the question.

There is one other passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians * in which the Church is identified in very emphatic language with the body of Christ, and which requires a brief notice because in it the truth is both amplified and confirmed. The relation between Christ and the Church is there compared, we might almost

* Chap. v. 22-33.

again say, identified, with the union of husband and wife in marriage. That the Church, of which the apostle speaks in this passage, is not some invisible ideal, but the same body which he has in his mind throughout, an organised human society; that it is, in fact, a body, not merely a spirit; is evident from his language. We may draw this conclusion also with certainty from the practical exhortations to husbands and wives which he founds on Christ's relations to the Church. For if these relations are real only as regards those who love Christ in truth, then the marriage tie also must be of the same kind, that is, not formed by an external authoritative act, but by the inner feelings of affection. And the practical exhortations would lose all their force. It would be no duty of husbands to love those wives who fail in love and obedience to them, for the absence of the qualities proper to the relation does, on the subjective theory, disannul the relation. On the other hand, that which all admit to be the truth as to the marriage relation exemplifies with singular force, as I have already indicated in considering the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself, the relations of the kingdom of heaven.* St Paul also in this passage connects the truth, that the Church is the body of Christ, with the other that it is the spouse of Christ, on the principle that in marriage the two become one flesh. And he speaks of Christ having through His sacrifice washed the Church "by the laver "of the water in the word," which evidently corresponds with our being "in one Spirit baptised into one body;" with the "one faith and one baptism."

But to examine the force of the apostle's language would far exceed our limits. I cannot indeed but be

* See Book II. Chap. II., p. 71.

conscious, in concluding this chapter, that the great subject discussed in it, which needs as much careful and patient investigation as any subject in Holy Scripture, has been very imperfectly treated: I can only hope in this brief and condensed argument to suggest some new materials for thought, which each may expand for himself, as God shall give him the ability.

Note on the Creeds.

Without entering upon questions that would carry us beyond the limits of our argument, it will be useful to observe how the principles which we have investigated are exemplified in the Primitive Creeds of the Christian Church. The Creed commonly known as the Apostles' Creed so obviously fulfils them, that it is hardly possible to conceive any expansion of the baptismal faith, which would be generally sufficient and yet more simple. In regard to the Nicene Creed it must be noticed, that the expression, ὁμοούσιος, "of one substance with "the Father," which is the distinctive characteristic of the Creed, and the chief subject of controversy, is not some explanation invented by the human mind, but is the same expression of the relation between Jesus Christ and the Father as was given by Christ Himself, "I and the Father "are one," (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμέν.) Whatever the οὐσία is, the oneness of it in the Father and the Son is as much implied in the words of Jesus Christ as in the Creed. It must be remembered however, that the word substance, if interpreted, not from the original language of Scripture, but by scholastic theology, would introduce a class of questions which cannot belong to the Catholic or fundamental faith, because they are explanations,—whether true or otherwise,—given by human reasoning and not by the revelation of God's Spirit. The *Filioque* also, which the Western Church has accepted as an addition to the Nicene Creed, is open to objections of a similar nature, as inserted in a standard of the one universal faith. That the truth implied by it can be proved from Scripture, is

not denied; but the expression goes beyond the language of Scripture on a subject wholly transcending the powers of human thought, and is therefore not legitimately a part of the Catholic faith.

But what of "the Confession of our Christian Faith, commonly called The Creed of Saint Athanasius?" The Church of England in her VIIIth Article, affirms that this ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for it may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture. This we may fully admit and maintain, as we may maintain the Thirty-nine Articles themselves to be agreeable to the Word of God, without allowing that this "Confession of Faith" has any title to be regarded in the same light as those which are properly called the Creeds,—that is as a summary of the articles of the one faith. It is indeed obviously an exposition and explanation of the Catholic faith, not the very faith itself, although in some of its language it seems to claim for itself that character. The real difficulty, in the so-called Athanasian Creed, lies, not in the damnatory clauses, but in its asserting "The "Catholic Faith is this." For in declaring that no one can be saved without believing the Catholic Faith, that is the one Faith on which the Church is founded, it does but repeat the language of Jesus Christ Himself, which is no less true and necessary because it offends the ears of men. But when such language is used, it becomes very necessary to provide that nothing should even appear to be included in the one faith, which does not properly belong to it. Now as regards this Confession it is impossible for any honest mind to deny, that some of its language is unsuitable as the expression of elementary truths which beginners in Christ must receive, and that it demands a process and habit of thought which we have no right to claim of those who are not mature in faith and knowledge: and further, that it is, in parts, not a statement of truth to be believed, but an explanation, and that not such as has been expressly revealed, which we found to be necessary for the one faith.

One instance of this is of itself sufficient to prove that this Confession is not the Catholic faith itself, but the Catholic faith *explained*. It affirms that "as the reasonable soul and "flesh is one man; so God and man is one Christ." Now this

is an attempt to explain the mystery of the Incarnation by comparing it with something else, with the phenomena of which we are familiar, but which we can no more understand than the union of the Godhead and manhood in Christ. Probably we have most of us felt thankful that such an explanation has been given us in this Confession ; it has much aided our spiritual perception of the reality both of the sufferings and of the exaltation of Christ in His manhood, His Godhead ever being eternally the same. And yet we dare not allow that this union of body and soul in one man is such an explanation of the union of the two natures in Christ as to be an article of faith. Used in a general way as an instructive analogy, which may answer some objections and illustrate some aspects of truth, it is sufficiently borne out by Holy Scripture, and profitable ; but it fails utterly if we press it further, and it can only mislead. It fails as regards that which is the real mystery of the Incarnation, the union of the infinite and the finite in one Christ. When we compare this analogy with that which we have examined in this chapter from St Paul's teaching, we see how defective and unphilosophical the one is, as compared with the completeness and reality of the other. Indeed the analogy in the Athanasian Creed was evidently never intended to be used as an article of the faith, as a root-truth out of which other truths might be developed. And there are other parts of this Confession of the same character.

We are driven therefore by the most rigorous necessity to the conclusion, that however valuable the Athanasian Confession may be and is as an exposition of the Catholic Faith, yet it neither is, nor is intended to be, the faith itself. That both its use, in the services of the Church, as a substitute for the Apostles' Creed, and some of its language, may lead the uninstructed to misapprehend its true character, can hardly be denied by any one who has given sufficient thought to the question, and whose judgment is not prepossessed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

THE Epistles of the apostle Paul to Timotheus and Titus, commonly known as the pastoral epistles, contain a far more complete representation of Church life than any of the apostolic writings which we have yet examined, and mark with great distinctness the growth of the Church to the period in which they were written, which was, as we may infer with much certainty, not long before the apostle's death. His work was now well-nigh accomplished, and the results of his apostolic labours were becoming consolidated, and had assumed a far more definite shape than we trace in his earlier writings.

The history of the Church in Ephesus indeed, where Timotheus was placed by St Paul, illustrates several marked stages in the development of the Churches planted by the apostle. First we gather from the Acts of the Apostles, that St Paul spent not less than three years in the work of preaching the Gospel, and establishing the Church of Christ, in that great city, the metropolis of Roman Asia. His labours were accompanied by supernatural powers, more numerous and significant than usual. Heathenism, assailed in its stronghold, and shaken to its foundations throughout the province, at the end of the three years threatens the life of the

apostle, who leaves these parts for Macedonia. But the Church of God has taken deep root at Ephesus. Not long afterwards, apparently within the year, we find the presbyters of the Ephesian Church summoned to Miletus, a distance of about fifty miles, to meet the apostle there. That they were in the fullest sense subordinate to St Paul in their charge of the Church in Ephesus, is evident, as well by the fact of his thus summoning them (μετεκαλέσατο τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας), as by the language in which he addresses them. He reminds them of his own labours at Ephesus, and expecting never to see them again in the flesh charges them to be faithful. "Take heed" (he says to them) "to yourselves and to all the flock in which the "Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the "Church of God which He hath purchased with His "own blood."

The word which our English version renders "over-"seers" (ἐπίσκοποι) is now for the first time used of pastors of the Christian Church, and not yet as a title of office, but as expressing the functions of the office. Some commentators, anxious to prove from the use of words, what is contradicted by the whole history, that there was originally no office superior to that of presbyters, complain of the English translators for not invariably rendering ἐπίσκοπος by the technical word "bishop." To be consistent they ought also to complain that the word διάκονος is not always translated "deacon." It would contribute yet more to that confusion of words with things on which their argument depends. It is of more importance however to notice the true meaning of the word ἐπίσκοπος. It is used both in classical writers and in the Septuagint of those to whom a charge is committed. In the Old Testament language, the

officers, civil and military, the overseers of the work of building the Lord's house, were ἐπίσκοποι.* In the New Testament, ἐπισκοπή is used of the office of an apostle, from which Judas fell.† Jesus Christ Himself is called by St Peter the Shepherd and ἐπίσκοπος of our souls.‡ The word therefore means one whose office it is to mind and care for the spiritual welfare of others. This charge Jesus Christ first undertook according to the will of God, and committed it to His apostles; the apostles committed it to others. It implies both the right and the duty of watching over the spiritual interests of others. These interests are primarily to each man his own charge,—and the charge cannot become the right and duty of another besides myself except by the authority of God. The ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος, the man who assumes a charge over others which does not belong to him, is not, as some imagine, a better Christian for doing so; his conduct is, according to St Peter,§ exactly the opposite to that which becomes the Christian. Indeed, as regards both the temporal and the spiritual welfare of men, the case is the same; to promote their interests is the duty of every one, to take charge of them, as one who has the right of counselling and directing, belongs only to those to whom it is committed. Now we have found from the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, as well as from those of His apostles, that the spiritual charge of men is provided for in His Church through an ordinance instituted by Himself; that a man cannot assume this of himself, or by others choosing to intrust to him the responsibility

* Cf. in Sept. Num. xxxi. 14; 2 Paraleip. xxxiv. 12, 17; Nehem. xi. 9, 14.

† Acts, i. 20. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 25. § 1 Pet. iv. 15.

of watching over their souls,* but the authority must be derived from God. Therefore St Paul reminds these presbyters of Ephesus, whom he had himself no doubt ordained during his residence in that city, that, being appointed according to Christ's ordinance, the Holy Ghost had intrusted them with their charge, as really as if they had been separated and consecrated to it, like Paul himself, by the express and special direction of the Spirit, or, like the Twelve, by the words and acts of the Lord Jesus. And yet the apostle knew, when he thus spoke of their office, that even from amongst these presbyters† themselves would some hereafter be found traitors, like Judas, who should pervert the Gospel of Christ. But, because the Holy Ghost had committed this charge to them, was their spiritual guidance to be received when they should speak perverse things, and draw disciples after them? God forbid.

But St Paul's words here suggest a question to which they do not supply the answer. He foresees that the result of his own departure will be, that wolves will come in and devour the flock of God, and that even those who are appointed to guard the sheep, may, instead of being as faithful watchdogs, prove themselves to be wolves in disguise. Now, as we have seen, the Christian ministry was instituted of Christ and endued with the gifts of the Spirit, for the purpose of witnessing to the faith and cultivating that knowledge of the Son of God in which the body of Christ is perfected. But if those, to whom this ministry is intrusted, teach falsehood instead of truth, although the ἐπιγνῶσις of the mature Christian will doubtless

* Cf. Jude, 12. ἑαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες.

† Acts, xx. 30. ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἀναστήσονται ἄνδρες.

enable him to discern this, yet those, whose spiritual perceptions are not so exercised as to discriminate between good and evil, will often be deceived and destroyed. Does then the office of one who thus perverts the truth continue or not? That an office, once intrusted to a man, is not at once disannulled because its duties are not faithfully performed, we have concluded from accumulated evidence; and yet, there must be some fatal organic defect in the body, if a ministry created for one purpose may be allowed to be exercised for the opposite. This is a virulent and malignant disease and not the mere absence of the life of love. The necessity for some organic or corporate action, by which such a contradiction to the life of the Church should be corrected, we may infer from the apostle's warnings; but it must be noticed that he neither directs nor indicates any such action on the part of the presbyters, but merely, in general terms, encourages them to be watchful, and to remember his teaching and example. His language indeed implies very forcibly that, in his absence, the apostolic authority which might remedy such dangers would be wanting.

Some four years afterwards St Paul, probably then in captivity in Rome, wrote the Epistle entitled to the Ephesians. The supposition that this was an encyclical letter, and not intended solely for the Ephesian Church, is confirmed by the fact that it contains no allusions to the special dangers of which he had warned the Ephesian presbyters, beyond the general truth,—which we examined in our last chapter,—that the offices of the ministry, beginning with that of apostles, were ordained as a safeguard against false doctrine. Again there is another interval, and the apostle writes his First Epistle

to Timothy. From this we learn, that St Paul's anticipation that he should no more see the face of the Ephesian pastors was not realised; Christ had other work for His servant there, which if he had not fulfilled, the Church of God would have suffered much loss in future ages. In fact, the remedy for the very evils indicated by St Paul's charge to the presbyters had to be supplied; and here again we find, as elsewhere, that the development of the Church's organisation to its maturity was not something definitely appointed beforehand, but the natural and necessary outgrowth from the fundamental laws of the Church's organic life, terminating in that definite form which is the true result of these laws. On this visit to Ephesus, which it is impossible not to place after St Paul's two years' imprisonment at Rome, he found that the dangers which he had foreseen as the result of his departure had already come upon the Church, and were threatening very serious consequences. We gather that the perversions of the truth took the form, on the one hand of erroneous teaching as to the Mosaical law, on the other of dangerous speculations in the border-land between religion and philosophy, where a pseudo-gnosis was obscuring the Gospel by its unholy principles. The question now comes before the apostle's mind in full force, how, after his departure again, provision shall be made against these evils. Hitherto (so far as we can judge) all the Churches planted by him were under his apostolic charge; but already the charge had become too heavy even for his gigantic powers; it was more and more apparent, as the Church grew, that the presence in every Church of one with apostolic authority was essential to the purposes for which the Church was instituted; of some spiritually gifted man, who should be

not merely one ἐπίσκοπος in that Church among many, but to whom personally the ἐπισκοπή of that Church should be intrusted. He therefore commits to Timotheus this charge, when he himself left Ephesus for Macedonia, and he writes an Epistle to him, and subsequently a second, to encourage and direct him in the charge. The Epistles evidently contemplate the continued residence of Timotheus at Ephesus, and the continued performance of his episcopal duties there, although one purpose of the second Epistle was to express St Paul's strong desire to see his beloved son once more, and soon, before the winter, lest he should behold him no more again in this life. I cannot conceive that any impartial student of the Epistles can draw any other conclusion from the Epistles than that, whatever might have been St Paul's original intention in leaving Timothy at Ephesus, the appointment at all events afterwards became permanent. But indeed, whether it were permanent or temporary as regarded Timotheus himself, the argument to be derived from this pregnant instance remains the same. It is equally an example of the necessity which, in the development of the Church, gradually manifested itself more and more distinctly, that, as the apostles ceased to be able to superintend in their own persons the Churches which they planted, they should place there in their own stead persons qualified and commissioned to exercise their powers. It proves further, that these powers were intrusted, not to a body of presbyters,—for if this had been consistent with the laws of the Church's organisation, why was it not done from the first at Ephesus?—but, in conformity with the law of personal responsibility in the apostolic office marked out by Christ Himself, in accordance also with the precedent long since given in

the Jerusalem Church, to one person, in whom the responsibilities of the charge of this Church should be vested. It may be asked perhaps, why, if this principle was a fundamental law of the Church, there should be an interval of some twenty-five years between the first example in Jerusalem, and the next in Ephesus; but we cannot argue on the assumption that there were no other instances in the interval, merely because they are not recorded; actually, we find the principle asserted as soon as it becomes necessary through the failure of the personal supervision of the apostles; and we can well understand that St Paul, in planting the Gospel among the Gentiles, would defer intrusting to others the superintendence of the infant Churches, until the Churches themselves should be thoroughly leavened with his own teaching, and until those should be trained up under his own eye, and thoroughly tested, to whom he could with confidence intrust his spiritual children.

That the true form of the organisation of the Church is by the pastoral charge of a Church with its presbyters being committed to one person, who exercises the ordinary functions of the apostolate, follows by necessary consequence, on the one hand from the promise of Christ that these functions shall be permanent, on the other from the principle, established in His acts and teaching, that those functions are personal. But the instances of James in Jerusalem, of Timotheus in Ephesus, and of Titus in Crete, would of themselves be sufficient to prove this, unless it could be shown, either that the government of the Church by the apostles passed elsewhere into other forms, or at least that these appointments indicated a transition state to other forms of polity. But hitherto the historical evidence has been

all in the appointed direction; the tendency, as the organisation develops itself, has been at the same time to distribute the functions, and to centralise them in separate persons. Originally the whole Church was under the joint charge of apostles. Contemporaneously with the bestowal of a portion of their functions on others, one with full apostolic powers receives the charge of the local Church in Jerusalem, and all apostles gradually enter upon separate spheres of personal labour. To suppose that this process could issue in an organisation, in which all pastors should hold the same office, and a body of presbyters would be substituted for personal administration,—that is, in which there should be neither distinction of functions nor centralisation,—in which that which had become heterogeneous and definite should become again homogeneous and indefinite,—is to suppose that the development of the Church was something anomalous, wholly at variance with the fundamental laws that govern all developments that are the subjects of human knowledge.*

The absolute personality of the instructions given both to Timothy and to Titus must strike every reader of the pastoral epistles. Each is addressed not as *an* ἐπίσκοπος and ποιμήν *in* the Church of God,—as the Ephesian presbyters were addressed by St Paul,—but as *the* guardian and pastor *of* the Church committed to his charge, the one person in whom all the responsibilities of the spiritual administration of the Church centred. He cannot relieve himself of the responsibilities by dividing them with others, but by prayer, and study of God's word, and giving himself wholly to his ministry,—and by stirring up, kindling into flame, the gift of God's Spirit,

* See *supra*, Chap. V. (3), p. 302.

which is in him through the laying on of hands, and which if neglected, would be dormant and profitless both to himself and others,—he must gain strength and grace to fulfil the charge he has received in the house of God. But it would be a serious mistake to conclude that because the responsibility is personal, therefore the administration is absolute. This would be a contradiction to the first and most fundamental principle of all true spiritual government, which must be, from its very nature, not by mere authority, which is law and therefore unspiritual, but through the concurrence of the will of the body governed. We learn the same truth from the Church being the body of Christ, of which all, however different their functions, are equally members, and in which one member affects another organically, that is not by external action as on inorganic matter, but through a vital action common to both. This spiritual constitution of the Church is also alone consistent with the warnings given by Jesus Christ to His disciples, on the one hand against calling any man their father on earth, or being themselves called spiritual guides; on the other, against claiming authority similar to that exercised by earthly rulers. We have already seen, in the examples given by St Paul and others, how the concurrent action of other members of the body is not only consistent with the exercise of apostolic authority but is necessary to it. The council of Jerusalem indeed is, in its principles, a complete type for the apostolic administration of the Church. As the apostles and presbyters with the whole Church on that occasion decided a matter which was of universal concern; so on the same principles, in each Church when completely constituted, the ἐπίσκοπος of the Church would need the aid of the presby-

ters or ἐπίσκοποι of the second order, and the co-operation of the whole body, in those questions which affected all. It is through such united action, that the most absolute personal responsibility becomes practically consistent with true Christian liberty.*

Before we examine into the particular instructions given to these chief pastors for the exercise of their high office, we must notice some general principles suggested by the apostle for the guidance of all who hold such an office. He urges on Timotheus the necessity for caution and wisdom in his administration, from the consideration that the Church is the house of God, and the pillar and ground of the truth.† The first of these expressions, "the house of God,"—which we must evidently understand in the sense of "household" or "family," and not of a material building,—carries our thoughts back to the teaching of Jesus Christ, in which the faithful and wise servant is represented as having authority in the household committed to him by his Lord, that he might give to each his portion in due season. But St Paul gives a new life and reality to the parallel. He tells Timotheus (ver. 4, 5, 12) that the same qualifications are required for office in the Church, as for governing wisely and well a man's own family. That the Church is the house of God is therefore not a mere figure of speech; the relations in the Church must be actually of the same kind as the relations in the family; for unless the subordination and the government in both had some elements in common, it would be impossible to argue, as St Paul does, from one to the other. In one respect indeed, namely in the law of family relations being the law of love,—and

* See Chap. III. *supra*, p. 268. † 1 Tim. iii. 15.

not that of mere justice as the law of the kingdoms of this world must be,—and therefore in its being administered in the freedom of the spirit and not in the bondage of the letter,—there is a close resemblance between the relations of a family and those in the Church of Christ. In the latter all are servants as regards their duties, but they are also children of the house, and brethren one of another, as regards their mutual relations.

But the second of these titles of God's Church requires more consideration. It is "the pillar and "ground of the truth." That this is predicated of the Church, and not of Timotheus himself or of the mystery of godliness that follows, must be admitted by every one who is content to take the words of the apostle in their simple and obvious meaning. They evidently mean that the Church is instituted to maintain, establish, and set forth the truth; which we have found St Paul affirming as expressly in other language, for example in the Epistle to the Ephesians. But it is important to notice what is in the apostle's mind when he speaks of the truth. It is not of truth generally, even of spiritual truth, of which the Church is the witness; but definitely of *the* truth,* of that which it is ordained to keep and uphold. And he explains this by proceeding to say that "confessedly," that is as all confess in the Church, "great," of vast importance to the Christian life, "is the mystery of godliness;" and this is defined by him, in language which has at least the rhythm and the comprehensiveness of a liturgical confession of faith,—as "He who was manifested in "the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels,

* στύλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας. It will be observed that while the nominatives are anarthrous, the genitive retains the article.

"preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the "world, taken up in glory." It is impossible not to recognise here the one faith in another form: the words are nothing else than an expansion of the radical truth that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." This faith therefore,—as we have also seen in considering the teaching of St Paul as to the body of Christ in his Epistle to the Ephesians,—is the truth of which the Church is ordained to be both the pillar and the basement. This it has to testify and to expound by all its ministries, ordinances, and discipline. Against departures from this one faith, however disguised,—such as the Spirit foretold should come in the latter days,—the Church is to watch and to protest. And it is undoubtedly of this same faith that St Paul speaks, when he solemnly charges Timotheus, more than once, to guard the sacred deposit committed to his trust, by the Holy Ghost given to us. We must observe, however, that the office both of the Church and of all its ministers is to guard, maintain, exhibit truth committed to them, not to add explanations, or develop doctrines into forms of thought and language that may be more logically consistent and complete than those which are revealed. It is one thing to condemn false conclusions, which by implication deny the faith, or any part of it; another, ourselves to deduce conclusions, and, because they appear to us not to deny but to confirm the faith, to teach and affirm them as part of that faith. The former is the office of the Church: the latter is not. Its duty as the guardian of the truth is simply conservative; the growth of the Church in knowledge is, we have found, subjective, and not through an accession of objective truth.

Let us now turn to investigate the functions of the

office received by Timothy in their details. The truth was to be maintained by him, not only by word and example, but by his whole administration. The apostle gives him instructions as to the public prayers of the Church, to be offered now in every place, and not merely in a temple at Jerusalem. These prayers were to contain intercessions for all men, for kings and all in authority. Both men and women were to unite in these common prayers, (for this seems to be the force of the word ὡσαύτως in 1 Tim. ii. 9), but women were commanded to keep silence in the Church, so that the command to pray does not imply of necessity any public ministration. Of those who are to be the public ministers and teachers he then proceeds to speak at length; and this portion of the apostle's instructions is so pertinent to our argument, and so illustrative of principles which we concluded from acts and words of Jesus Christ, that we must examine the subject from all sides.

(1.) We learn then that now there are two distinctly recognised orders of the Christian ministry, subordinate to the apostles and to others endowed with apostolic powers. The first of these are called sometimes πρεσβύτεροι, which title, we have seen, was derived from the Jewish organisation, and indeed originally from the patriarchal idea of seniority giving precedence in religious matters; at other times, ἐπίσκοποι, to denote that the cure of souls is committed to them. The second class has the title of διάκονοι, implying active service. It must be remembered, however, that all these terms are used in the New Testament, not merely as descriptive of different grades in the ministry, but of the apostles themselves, in whom all those functions were originally vested which in

the process of development became distributed in several offices. These offices gradually assume the several titles according to their several functions. The fact that the first of these two classes, after being at first always called presbyters, has acquired, at all events in St Paul's language and in Gentile Churches, the other title of ἐπίσκοποι, indicates, it would seem, a certain growth of idea as to the nature and functions of the office. The original title of presbyters or elders was taken naturally in the Jerusalem Church, where it first appears, from the Jewish title; the root idea in it being a certain share in the government of the body. During the period in which the supernatural gifts abounded, and the prophets and others spiritually endowed took a large share in the edification of the Church, the functions of the presbyters as spiritual pastors would be less apparent. But as the supernatural gifts were gradually absorbed into the permanent order of the Church, the Jewish idea of elders was felt to be insufficient to express the highest and most distinct functions of the office. Moreover we have seen reason to suppose that the original office of the elders included that of the deacons, and it must be observed that in the New Testament we never read of "presbyters and deacons," but only of "ἐπίσκοποι "and deacons." At all events, the use of the term ἐπίσκοποι to describe the presbyters of the Church, indicates a transition state, when the spiritual office of the presbyters had become more prominent, and when the title of apostle was still given to men invested with apostolical functions, a title which was afterwards reserved for the Twelve and for St Paul, whilst that of ἐπίσκοπος was assigned to one who had not a charge *in* a Church, but the pastoral charge *of*

the Church. But however the technical titles may be changed, it still remains as certainly true as in the times of the New Testament, that those, who from the time of the complete organisation of the Church have been called "bishops," exercise apostolical functions, and that those who are (as from the first) called "presbyters" have that charge of souls, of which St Paul says, that he who seeks after an ἐπισκοπή desires an honourable office.

(2.) The several functions of the two offices may be determined to some extent by the qualifications required for them in the apostle's instructions to Timotheus and to Titus.

The πρεσβύτερος or ἐπίσκοπος must be a man of blameless life and conversation, of good report not only among Christians but also amongst those that are without. He must not be a new convert since that would expose him to temptations to pride in his office. He must also have qualities calculated to increase his influence over others. He ought to be a friendly, hospitable man, as well as self-controlled and religious. Not a man given to strife, or a lover of money. But there are some special qualifications yet needed for the office,—for he is a steward of God, as Jesus Christ describes those who should have charge in His household. He must therefore be apt to teach, with a firm hold of the faith, that he may be able both to instruct the brethren in sound doctrine and to answer the adversaries of the truth. To this is added that his family,—for he is supposed to be a married man,—ought to be well ordered, not only that no reproach may be cast on his office, but also because a man, who cannot govern his own house well, is not likely to take sufficient care of the Church of God.

The deacons also must not be untried men, but

known to be of honest and sober conversation. And although they do not need the same powers of teaching as are necessary for the higher office, yet theirs is no mere secular work. They should be men who "hold the mystery of the faith," not only in the understanding, but in a good conscience; such as is required for that ἐπιγνῶσις, or spiritual perception, of which St Paul elsewhere speaks as the safeguard against the varied deceits of false doctrine. And they also ought to be men who govern well their children and households. For although they have as yet no spiritual charge, yet those who have fulfilled well the duties of this inferior office gain thereby an honourable standing in Christ's Church, and much confidence in the faith. The most natural and obvious meaning of this, especially as it is a reason for the capacity for governing being required in a deacon, is that having proved himself to be a faithful and wise servant he thereby qualifies himself to receive an ἐπισκοπή in the household. Those little realise what the household of Christ is, who imagine that this is an unworthy motive to set before the deacon. St Paul's instruction to Timotheus evidently amounts to this: Appoint those as deacons, who, after they have been proved in the lower office, may become qualified for the higher. For one great advantage of the deacon's office in the Church is, that it is one in which men's qualifications for the pastoral office may be tested.

The language of the apostle leads us to infer that women also held the office of deacon in the apostolic Church; and this is confirmed by the mention, in his Epistle to the Romans, of one Phœbe whom he calls "deaconess of the Church in "Cenchrea." For deaconesses the qualifications of

character are much the same as for the men. In private ministrations, whether of temporal or spiritual relief, women might, and actually did, fulfil all the most important functions of the diaconate. St Paul mentions, in more than one epistle, the names of women whom he recognises as fellow-workers with himself and who laboured much in the Lord. For, be it remembered, the duties of the diaconate, as well as those of the presbyter, are all included in the office of an apostle.

(3.) In order to understand the full force of St Paul's language, it will be necessary to refer to conclusions which we drew from the teaching of Christ Himself, which throw much light on the instructions given in these pastoral epistles. We concluded from the words of Jesus Christ * that the appointment to an office of trust in the house of God would be through a process, which in a certain sense should be a judgment. The servant in the family, who should be adjudged after a certain probation to be faithful and wise, would have a charge, an ἐπισκοπή, committed to him, and by his conduct in this office, as steward in the household, would the final sentence on him be determined. St Paul here therefore describes the qualifications which a man must be adjudged to possess, in order that he may be intrusted with such a charge. But by whom is this preliminary judgment to be passed? We gather that the evidence, on which the judgment must be founded, should be received from all, to a certain extent even from unbelievers. But the apostle writes to Timotheus as to one with whom rested the sole and undivided responsibility of the ultimate decision as to the qualifications for the pastoral office. The Epistle to Titus marks yet more definitely the personal responsibility of

* See Part II. Chap. VII., p. 132.

him to whom the administration of the Church was intrusted. St Paul had left him in Crete that he might complete the work which the apostle began there of setting all things in order, and especially that he might appoint presbyters in every city. By whomsoever the selection—in modern language the nomination and presentation—might be made, the appointment, which includes the judgment on the person, is by him who is invested with the apostolic authority.

(4.) We may well ask here, when we consider the vast personal responsibilities with which Timotheus and Titus were intrusted, as judges of matters affecting vitally the interests of the kingdom of God, how they themselves were called and appointed to their high office. It would be contrary to every principle indicated, alike by the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, and by those of His apostles, if those, who have authority to call and appoint others to a pastoral charge, should not themselves receive that authority by a solemn call and appointment. The apostles themselves were appointed by a most solemn act of Jesus Christ, after special and prolonged prayer. Matthias was co-opted into the apostolic body, to supply the place of him who fell, after a direct appeal, with prayer, to the judgment of Christ Himself. Barnabas and Saul, though already "prophets and teachers," are separated under express direction of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands of men immediately authorised by the Spirit. Of the consecration of Timothy to his office we have a few notices, which indicate that there was something of a special nature in it, as indeed we might expect, considering that he was (in ecclesiastical language) the first bishop of a Gentile Church, as Paul was the first apostle of the Gentiles. He is reminded

(1 Tim. i. 18, 19) of the prophecies that anticipated his future labours, and the apostle bids him "*in them*" war a good warfare. St Paul is afterwards more explicit (1 Tim. iii. 14). He bids him not neglect the gift that was in him which was *given him through prophecy*, with the laying on of the hands of the πρεσβυτέριον. In the second epistle, he exhorts him to kindle into flame the gift of God, "which," the apostle says, "is in "thee by the laying on of my hands." "The gift," to which the apostle refers, was manifestly that which Timothy needed for his duties at Ephesus, and therefore we must infer that the ordination, of which he speaks, must have been, not that by which Timothy was placed in any inferior office, but that by which he received an office with apostolic functions. This was through prophecies which designated him for this office, as St Paul himself was designated before him. From one passage, we should conclude that the laying on of hands was by St Paul himself; from the other, by the presbytery. But as it is not possible, I think, to suppose that different acts were intended, the presbytery must include St Paul,—indeed we know from St Peter that an apostle is also a presbyter,—and St Paul's act was accompanied by that of the whole presbytery. But what was this πρεσβυτέριον? The word is only used twice elsewhere in the New Testament, and in both cases of a body which included not only those who were technically distinguished as "elders," but also "chief priests."* In the term, as used in the Church, the apostle certainly included himself, and therefore

* Luke, xxii. 66, συνήχθη τὸ πρεσβυτέριον τοῦ λαοῦ, ἀρχιερεῖς τε καὶ γραμματεῖς. "The senate of the people, both chief priests and scribes." In Acts, xxii. 5, St Paul says that he received letters of authority from "the chief priest and all the senate." Elsewhere (xxvi. 10) he says that he received his authority from "the chief priests."

others also of the ἀρχιερεῖς of the new dispensation may have been included. But he speaks of the act of the presbytery as his own act; indeed the instructions to Timothy imply that whatever authority he exercised was derived through the apostle. Paul, however, in the separation of Timothy to the work, acted as the president of a Christian senate, how composed we are not told, and his action and theirs was under express instruction from the Holy Spirit. And, although there was doubtless somewhat special in the case of Timotheus—as in that of the consecration of Paul himself—yet we may gather some general principles applicable in ordinary cases. In regard to him the united action not only of presbyters of the first order, who possess all the apostolic functions, but also of those of the second order, may be implied in the word πρεσβυτέριον. But, as a general rule, in the permanent organisation of the Church, it is quite consistent with this and with St Paul's language, that the actual appointment to the office should be by presbyters of the first order, and that the laying on of hands, which is the organic act by which authority is committed, and a symbol of the delegation of office, should be by them alone; on the other hand, that the concurrence of the body of presbyters of the second order, interested in the appointment to this office, should be necessary, or even that the election of the person should rest with them, whilst the judicial act should rest with the higher πρεσβυτέριον. Such a method would bring into harmony the principles which we trace in the exceptional appointment of Barnabas and Saul, and now of Timothy; and the general principle, which we concluded from the history of the rite of imposition of hands, that it would not ordinarily be used, except by those who possessed an office, as a

symbol of committing to others the authority and functions of their own office, in whole or in part.

(5.) We are now therefore enabled to determine clearly and completely, what is that principle of succession to office in the kingdom of heaven which has superseded the old unspiritual principle of succession by natural descent. After our careful investigation of the history of this question, as it has gradually unfolded itself in the acts and teaching of Christ and His apostles, we can have no hesitation in affirming, that the principle of succession to any office in the Church of Christ is the appointment of a man as qualified for the office by those who have authority to judge of the qualifications and to appoint. Jesus Christ thus appointed the Twelve, having selected them from His disciples as best fitted for the office. On this principle Matthias was appointed to fill the place of Judas. So the Seven were appointed. So Barnabas and Saul were marked out by the Holy Spirit for their special work. So Timotheus was designated for his own office, and on this principle he was directed to appoint others to their several offices in the Church. This principle of appointing those that are adjudged to be capable for the work is obviously the only principle that can be really spiritual. But in the application of the principle the question at once arises, How is this capacity to be determined? The reply to this appears very easy, so long as Jesus Christ Himself was the judge; or when the Holy Ghost by supernatural acts designated men to their offices, or when inspired apostles appointed to office. But we must not forget that one whom Christ Himself appointed proved a traitor; that the apostles were men of like passions with us, and could not read the hearts of men. The principle, as one of organisa-

tion, does not the less certainly contain in itself true vitality, because it may fail to produce its legitimate results in a body the members of which are subject, as we have seen, to other influences than those of the organism itself. But let us observe how the principle has in itself the law of sequence. No one is appointed to the pastoral office except as being capable. Who has the authority to judge that he is capable? One appointed to the office of the judge as being capable of judging. Who judges of his capacity as a judge? It is evident that those who are qualified to act as judges of capacity, in matters which belong to their own office, will be qualified to judge also of capacity for judging, so that we need carry the principle no further for its practical operation; only we might expect that for this latter judgment more authority and more knowledge would be required, which in ordinary cases would be attained by the concurrence of several of those who are qualified to judge. For example, let us take the case before us. The presbyters of the Ephesian Church are to be appointed as competent for the pastoral office. Who judges of their competency? One who was himself appointed to this office of judging, as capable of that office. Who judged of the fitness of Timotheus to judge of the qualifications for the pastoral office? The apostle Paul, whom Jesus Christ Himself called to this ministry, and whose office it was to pass such judgments in the house of God.

It is evident that this law of succession is the only possible law, that should on the one hand recognise the reality of office, and on the other be entirely free from all considerations beyond that of fitness for an office. Nor can any link in the chain be omitted, without introducing a confusion as to the qualifications for an

office; as for example, if all those, who are appointed to the pastoral office, should also have the power of appointing to that office, it would imply that every one who is qualified for the cure of souls, and for teaching the faith, has also the higher endowments necessary for a judge, which endowments are manifestly of a different order from those necessary for teaching. This law then is in the highest degree according to reason, *νόμος λογικός*, the only law indeed possible in an organisation which is to represent Christ's kingdom upon earth. And yet, strange to say, it is often represented, not less by those who receive its letter but misapprehend its spirit, than by those who reject this law of succession, as something superstitious and irrational.

It is to be observed that this law differs from that of succession by election in the principle, first of responsibility, and then of organic action, that governs it. I mean by election appointment to an office by the choice of those in regard to whom the office is to be exercised. In the ordinary affairs of life, since the beneficial exercise of an office evidently promotes the interests of those for whom it is exercised, in these succession by election is justly considered sufficient to secure one qualified for the office. And yet, even in temporal matters, the inadequacy of this principle is often recognised; few would advocate the appointment of civil judges by popular election. There are two fatal objections to succession by election in many cases. First, a defect of knowledge in the electors as to the true nature of the qualifications required for the office. Secondly, that election by many weakens, and, if the number of electors is large, almost destroys the sense of personal responsibility. But the law of succession in the Church of Christ, whilst it admits all the advantages attending

election—since, as we have seen, the appointment may be preceded by election—yet throws the responsibility of the appointment on those who hold an office involving such responsibility; and, further, it individualises the responsibility and makes it personal. The law therefore, rightly interpreted, is a consequence of the law of the supremacy of conscience. But, further, appointment by election alone wants those elements of organic action which are combined in the true law of succession in the Christian Church. In this, every member performs functions proper to itself. The testimony and even the will of those for whom the office is exercised form an element in the judgment; for example, in the first appointment to office by the apostles, they ordained the seven whom the multitude selected. The action is that of the body through its several organs, each fulfilling its own function, and co-operating to the result.

(6.) Thus far we have discussed this law without taking account of that, without which however its real significance cannot be understood; I mean the spiritual gifts belonging to the Body of Christ. Our belief in these must not indeed deter us from the freest investigation of the natural principles involved in the law, because the Holy Spirit is not given to do violence to human nature, but to work in accordance with its truest laws. Nothing could be conceived more contrary to the true constitution of the Body of Jesus Christ, and therefore more unspiritual, than any law of succession which should be opposed to fundamental principles of man's nature, and which could only be sustained in its action by some overpowering supernatural force. We must not think of this law of succession as if there were some magical force in it, instead of its being a reason-

able principle, suited for the kingdom of Him who is the Son of Man, having all things in common with man without sin or imperfection. But, as we must not lose the human element in the divine, neither must we permit the divine element to be obscured by the human. Nothing can be more unequivocal than the assertion of St Paul that spiritual gifts were bestowed on Timotheus by the laying on of his hands; and these gifts, it must be noticed, not supernatural in the strict sense of the word, such as might be required for an exceptional condition of the Church, but those which all, who in any age exercise similar functions, need for their office. "For," St Paul reminds him, "God hath not "given us the spirit of timidity, but of power and of "love and of discipline."* Yet these gifts, like the treasure in the field, are not beneficial through the mere possession to him on whom they are bestowed. The gift must be kindled into flame, or it will only be for the condemnation of the possessor.

In order however to be assured that the case of Timotheus was not something exceptional, in which special gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed because there was special need for them under the circumstances of the Ephesian Church, we must briefly refer to principles which have been gradually unfolded through the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles. The promise of Christ was, that the Holy Spirit should be given to abide with His disciples for ever; and He

* The rendering of *σωφρονισμός* as "a sound mind," or even as "self-"control," certainly does not agree so well with the apostle's argument, and has not the same authority, as that of "correction" or "discipline." Suicer gives the gloss, *σωφρονισμός. νουθεσία μετὰ ἐπιπλήξεως.* In later times it was the technical word for ecclesiastical correction. I have taken the word "discipline" not as excluding "self-restraint" but implying it; for discipline, like charity, must begin at home.

was to be given, not as of old, only to a few prophets and righteous men, but to pervade the whole body. Every member of that body is a temple of the Holy Ghost that is in him, so that whatever may be his proper functions, these he may undertake and fulfil, not on the chance that some heavenly power will occasionally aid him, but in the confidence that all spiritual powers sufficient for his responsibilities are his rightful possession in Christ. But, observe, for his own proper responsibilities, not for those which do not pertain to his state or office in the body. The vital power pervading the natural body does not empower the ear to see, or the eye to hear; but qualifies each member to perform its own functions. Consequently, the act by which a man is duly appointed to any state or office in the Church,—in other words is constituted a particular member of the body of Christ with certain functions to fulfil,—does at the same time confer on him those spiritual gifts which are required for the fulfilment of these functions. And yet not in some unreasonable or unspiritual manner; that is, neither independently of the qualifications and capacities for the office, which are presupposed in his appointment, by the Spirit superseding the natural principles on which the body is organised; nor, without the co-operation of the man's own spirit for the beneficial use of these gifts, to affirm which is to deny that the gifts are truly spiritual.

Does this law then require us to deny the reality of spiritual life or the value of Christian work in all departures from the law? Those must have studied the argument to little effect who draw any such conclusion. We have indeed determined the law by a careful process of induction from the New Testament,

and we have ascertained that such a law is in conformity with those by which man is governed. For it is not something arbitrary or artificial, binding because of rules and commandments; but it is the true order of Christ's Church, because it is in consonance with the order of that nature of which the Body of Jesus Christ is constituted. But we must not therefore assume that the Spirit of God works only according to such order. We have found sufficient evidence to the contrary both during the life of Jesus Christ, and in the apostolic age. We do not in the least sanction wilful or presumptuous derelictions of a divine order, when we acknowledge, not grudgingly and by constraint but freely and heartily, that exceptions to the order may be allowed by Christ in order to prove, that the excellency of the power is of God and not of man, and that not the order and structure itself but the Spirit is the life. In nature itself abnormal and irregular growths are often not destitute of vitality or of active power, even when they both indicate and produce disease.

There is another large question respecting which the pastoral epistles supply materials for study, I mean, the question of Church discipline. We have already discussed this at some length elsewhere, but we must now examine some new features which present themselves in this more advanced stage of Church organisation. That the action required for discipline is the organic action of the Church, is evident from the first principles respecting it enunciated by Christ Himself, and the operation of these principles we have already investigated in the history of the Church in Corinth.*

* Part II. Chap. V., p. 114; Part III. Chap. XI., p. 405-415. See also Part IV. Chap. II. Section (3).

But St Paul, in the pastoral epistles, throughout assumes that the ultimate responsibility of the action rested with Timotheus and Titus, whom he evidently regards as exercising the same apostolic authority in the Churches intrusted to them, as he himself exercised in Corinth, and in other Churches founded and as yet superintended by himself. The presence of Timotheus in Ephesus had supplied the want which was indicated by St Paul in his address to the Ephesian presbyters. The apostle now, after speaking of the false doctrines which were infesting that Church, and turning away many from the faith of Christ, proceeds to encourage Timotheus, by the memory of the prophecies which designated him for his office, to "war the good war-" fare, having faith and a good conscience, which some " having rejected from themselves, concerning the faith " then suffered shipwreck; of whom" (he says) "is " Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I delivered to " Satan that they may be taught by punishment not to " blaspheme." The meaning of this delivering unto Satan we have already examined, and concluded that the permanent element in the sentence was the solemn expulsion of the offender from the kingdom of Christ.* But in the case we then considered the offence was against morality; here it is a wilful and impious denial of "the faith," that is of some fundamental article of that faith which is involved in "the mystery of godli-" ness," that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." In his second epistle, in a passage in which he refers again to one of these enemies of the faith,† we may trace the several methods by which Timothy was to fulfil the special purpose, for which the apostle left him in Ephesus, of "charging some that they teach no other

* See *supra*, Chap. XI., p. 407. † 2 Tim. xi. 14-21.

"doctrine" than the faith of Christ. First of all, he was to warn the disciples against logomachies and fruitless speculations, which were sure to overthrow the faith of those who listened to them; and he was to approve himself a good workman, rightly dividing the word of truth. Then he was to *withdraw* * from profane babblings. We shall better understand the force of this word, when we consider presently a similar direction in the Epistle to Titus; but that it implies more than refusing to enter on such controversies is evident from the argument which follows. For he warns Timotheus that these irreverent speculations, though in their beginnings they might appear to be insignificant, were sure to grow into some worse form of impiety, and such doctrine would spread like a cancer in the human body, at first a trifling sore but in time eating out the life itself, and therefore (we must infer) needing excision at an early stage of the disease. And he gives an instance of this development of fatal error in Hymenæus and Philetus, who missed the truth and were subverting the faith of some, by teaching that the resurrection had already passed. That is, the ultimate result of their speculations on spiritual truth had been that they denied that which St Paul himself had reminded the Corinthians was a fundamental article of the faith,—being involved in Christ's own resurrection,—namely, the resurrection of the body.

The language here seems to imply that in Ephesus itself these ultimate results of irreverent and unspiritual doctrines had not developed themselves: there was as yet there probably no necessity for Timotheus to have resort to those extreme measures which, St Paul

* περιΐστασο.

reminds him, are necessary whenever the faith itself is expressly denied. Indeed in the figure of the great house with some vessels to honour and some to dishonour, by which in a following verse St Paul evidently describes the Church, Timotheus is warned that he must not expect to find a perfect Church, although it be the house of God. He must not be hasty in plucking up the tares, but though he find many who may appear to him to have no sign of being vessels fit for the Master's use, who are more ready to receive any idle speculation than the simple truth of God, still he must neither be discouraged, nor take on himself to judge those whom God Himself would judge in the great day.

Thus far then these two conclusions are clear, and consistent with all that has been determined from the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself,—first, that open and wilful deniers of the faith are to be solemnly put away,—secondly, that though men's faith be not wholly sound, though they be not the good seed but the bad, nevertheless, as a general rule, they must be allowed to continue in the Church of God. But what of the *teachers* who are insidiously sowing tares, although as yet they have not proceeded to any denial of the faith? The language of St Paul, as I have observed, certainly indicates,—for we have had sufficient evidence that he does not use metaphors at random, but freely draws practical conclusions from analogies between natural and spiritual things,—that the teaching which is like a cancer in the body, and which cannot be checked by gentler remedies, demands, when its first symptoms appear, the sharp knife of discipline; *οὐ φαρμάκων χρὴ πρὸς τομῶντι πήματι.** The question then amounts

* Soph. Aj. 582.

to this; Is there no course, which one like Timotheus, intrusted with the administration of the Church, ought to adopt in regard to teachers of false doctrine, intermediate between the excommunication of one who rejects the faith, and the allowance of those who yet are vessels to dishonour? Such a course is, I think, sufficiently indicated in the apostle's language, although he only suggests principles and gives no definite rules in a matter, which required the utmost discrimination and judgment, and not mere technical distinctions, on the part of him whom he advised. For the instruction given both to Timotheus and to Titus as to such teachers is, "withdraw thyself," (περιΐστασο), "refuse "to acknowledge them" (παραιτοῦ). We should conclude therefore, that whenever unspiritual teaching took such a form as was likely to be dangerous, and to be gradually developed into some fundamental error, if warning proved insufficient, such an one was then to be repudiated as a teacher of the faith of Christ; which undoubtedly involves the ecclesiastical idea of his being deprived of all authority which he may have received in the Church of God as a pastor and guardian of the flock. That this is to be inferred indirectly from St Paul's advice to Timotheus, and is not expressed in the ecclesiastical language of the post-apostolic age, merely indicates that the epistle was written at that period of the Church's history at which it must have been written, if it is authentic; namely, before the organisation of the Church was definitely completed. But such inferences, to one who is studying the development of the Church through its different stages, are really more valuable than any positive directions, from which the governing principles might not be so distinctly concluded. Principles such as those which St

Paul enunciates are the source and the standard of all laws suitable for Christ's Church.

We may draw similar conclusions from the Epistle to Titus. He is directed to appoint faithful and able men as presbyters who may be able to answer the adversaries of the truth. "For," St Paul says, "there "are many insubordinate vain talkers and deceivers "of men's minds, especially among the Jewish converts, "whose mouths must be stopped, since they are over- "throwing the faith of whole families, teaching doc- "trines which were no part of the doctrine that ought "to be taught, merely for the love of base gain." The untruthful and low moral character of the Cretans made it specially necessary that such teaching should be met by sharp and authoritative rebukes. But the question is, How is Titus to stop the mouths of such teachers, if still for the love of gain they persevere in undermining the faith without positively and expressly denying it? He repeats* the advice given to Timotheus, "Withdraw thyself" from such doctrines, stand aloof from them; implying, first that he was not to enter into controversy on unprofitable questions,—then that such teaching was to be repudiated. And there is one form of error respecting which more definite instruction is given. "An heretical man, after a first "and second admonition, shun; knowing, that such "an one is thoroughly perverted, and sins being self- "condemned."

The word αἵρεσις had certainly not acquired, in the language of the New Testament, the limited and technical meaning, which was afterwards assigned to it, of the deliberate avowal of fundamental error. It means rather a "sect" or "school," not necessarily deny-

* Titus, iii. 9-11.

ing fundamental truths, but, as the origin of the word implies, arbitrarily selecting doctrines, and building up on them a system of religious philosophy more or less departing from the simplicity of revealed truth. In this sense the New Testament speaks of the αἵρεσις of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. The Jews called Christianity the αἵρεσις of the Nazarenes. But St Paul repudiates the term as applied to Christians, because (he says) we only worship the God of our fathers, believing His word and holding doctrines to which that word testifies. Christianity was not some Jewish sect, but the true and only legitimate development of God's Israel. On the other hand, St Paul warned the Corinthian Christians,* who were much divided by party feeling on the subject of doctrines, that the result of this must be, that there would be not only divisions (σχίσματα) amongst them; but also sects, (αἱρέσεις,) separate parties definitely distinguished by their peculiar doctrines; this indeed was one of the trials ordained by Christ Himself for His Church, in order that it might be proved already to some extent who were really His, and who were not. For by joining a sect, and isolating himself from the body of Christ's people, a man, as St Paul says also here to Titus, is self-condemned. The case then, which he contemplates in his instructions to Titus, is that of one who not only is deceived by these profitless and unspiritual doctrines, but who is so thoroughly perverted by them, that he forms, or joins himself to, a sect professing and teaching such opinions, instead of the unadulterated truth of the Gospel. Such an one is to be admonished once, and, if he still refuses to hear, a second time, and then, if gentler measures fail, "with-

* 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.

" draw from him." It is impossible not to recognise here a correspondence with the instructions given by Jesus Christ in the case of an offending brother, which we concluded indeed were generally applicable in the case of σκάνδαλα.* And therefore, although the English rendering "reject" hardly gives the meaning of the original word (παραιτοῦ), and although we cannot consider the act as equivalent to that solemn excommunication, which is implied by delivering unto Satan, and which was reserved for those who were heretics in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, yet we must conclude that the apostle intended that such an one should be practically excluded from the communion of saints, and no longer treated as a Christian brother; that is, in the words of Jesus Christ, " Let him be to " thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Before we leave this part of the question of discipline, it would be well that we should consider some objections, urged very frequently and with great show of reason against that method of dealing with false doctrine, which the apostle here distinctly recommends. He advises, we have seen, first plain and forcible argument,—not entering into controversy about profitless questions, but simply setting forth spiritual truth: then, if this fails, authoritative condemnation. This latter course appears to many in the present day a mere *brutum fulmen*. They may allow that in the apostolic age, when such authority was supported by miraculous powers intrusted to apostles, its exercise might be necessary and expedient. But now, when men are governed by reason and not by authority in matters of religion, the attempt to exercise it seems to them only to display a weakness, and confess an ina-

* See Part II. Chap. V., p. 113.

bility to defend ourselves by argument. Indeed we must admit this much, that great discrimination and judgment are needed in all exercise of authority. And, if St Paul refers to the national character of the Cretans as a reason for severity in dealing with a feeble and demoralised race, we may well conceive that he would advise a somewhat different method of dealing with our age, which is reaping the fruits of eighteen centuries of Christian teaching, and in which the intellectual powers of man have attained an exactness and a certainty in logical reasoning, such as was never conceived possible by Greek or Roman philosophy. But the fact still remains unaltered, which we considered in a former chapter, that the ἐπιγνῶσις of the Christian is not cultivated by logical reasoning, but by the power of simple spiritual truth. And authoritative condemnation, whether its moral force be recognised or not, yet does practically determine the teaching of Christ's Church, which is by far the most important question for one who is an ἐπίσκοπος of the Church to consider. Jesus Christ founded this Church and its ministries for certain purposes, and, first of all, to bear witness to the truth; and the ἐπίσκοπος is therefore first of all bound to provide that it shall bear no other testimony.

And a similar reply must be given to the objection, that St Paul's strong feeling against all religious speculation is not applicable to the speculative tendencies of modern thought, and at all events must not be so interpreted as to impose any restraints upon perfect freedom of thought. We may well allow that the ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις, the gnosis which deserved not its name, and which St Paul held in such just contempt and abhorrence, had little in common with the exact knowledge, and the severely logical investigations, of

modern science. The trifling sophistries, which were then so prejudicial to the Christian faith, would be as certainly condemned by the science of the nineteenth century, as by St Paul in the first century, though on different grounds. But the danger, which the apostle apprehended, arose not from the exercise of the speculative reason in itself, which man is bound to employ freely, and to its utmost limits, on all matters in which the human understanding may attain definite and certain truth,—but from its entering on that sphere, in which it is utterly powerless and worse than unprofitable, the sphere of spiritual truth. Such speculations inevitably lead to errors, more or less fatal, because they attempt to judge the truth by faculties totally incapable of such an office.

Generally, we may observe with regard to all these wise counsels of the great apostle to his spiritual sons, Timotheus and Titus, that the spirit of them and not the mere letter must be studied. We may instance the rule given to Titus respecting one who is, in the New Testament sense, *heretical,* that is a sectarian. A modern sect, which may in many respects correspond with the apostle's idea of a αἵρεσις,—at all events in exaggerating some truths out of due proportion, even if it does not overlay the truths with actual error,—may have arisen out of circumstances wholly unlike any that were possible in apostolic times, out of grievous defects in the Church itself, and perhaps as a protest against some corruptions of the truth. A very large margin must be left for Christian forbearance and charity; for the rule given by Christ Himself, "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with "another." And yet, however this may affect our conduct towards persons, it must not be forgotten that

every such sect is itself an αἵρεσις, and therefore an offence in the kingdom of heaven; first, because it disturbs the unity of the body, and secondly, and not least, because a selected portion of divine truth,—whether it be mixed with erroneous teaching or not, — is substituted for that which is Catholic and all-comprehensive.

With regard to the other branch of Church discipline, that which deals with offences against morality, very few remarks will be necessary, as it has been discussed at length in a former chapter. The apostle again gives Timotheus directions which imply that the responsibility of such discipline rested with him. He is instructed not to receive a charge against a presbyter, except on the evidence of two or three witnesses; that is, he is to proceed legally, as required by the old law. The same rule, it will be remembered, the apostle imposed on himself in reference to the scandals in the Corinthian Church. The office of Timotheus therefore, like that of St Paul, involved judicial functions to be administered formally and regularly, as those in authority under the law of Moses were required to administer them. And the language of St Paul implies that these judicial functions in the Church would primarily and chiefly affect those who hold office therein; for he cannot mean that legal evidence would be required for a charge against a presbyter, and would not be necessary if a layman were accused. But, in fact, offences may be just cause for censure, or deposition from office, in the one, which the teaching of Christ proves must be tolerated in the other. The apostle gives the further rule, which seems also to apply to presbyters, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that the "rest also may fear." Such discipline Timothy is

solemnly adjured to exercise both without prejudice against an accused person and without partiality in his favour. That the apostle has in his mind chiefly the exercise of discipline over those who hold office appears from his adding, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, "neither be a partaker in other men's sins." Some suppose that this refers to the absolution of penitents, their readmission to the communion of the Church being in early times by the imposition of hands; but as St Paul speaks in these epistles of laying on of hands in ordination, and not for other purposes, it is safer to be guided by the apostle's use of the words. We must understand them therefore as warning Timothy, on the one hand against the hasty appointment of men to office, lest afterwards they prove unworthy, on the other against participation in other men's sins by failing to exercise discipline on those in office who offend. For Timotheus would be responsible if such should continue in the ministry, whereas many offences in the Church at large have to be tolerated. "Keep your- "self pure," the apostle says, in all the exercise of your office; and as you are of infirm constitution, and need vigour of body and mind for your work, drink a little wine, and do not risk your health by always drinking water. And, he adds, you must exercise a sound and healthy judgment, remembering that in the case of some men their sins are open beforehand, leading the way to judgment; and some men they follow after: and even so the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and those good works that are of a different kind come to light sooner or later. The whole of this appears to refer, primarily and especially, to what in modern ecclesiastical language we should call a bishop's government of his clergy, and to the kind of discipline that would

be necessary in their case. At all events it is obviously and directly applicable to this.

We cannot but observe generally how much, at the present stage of the Church's development, was left in regard to discipline to the judgment of him whom we should call the bishop of each Church, and how little was defined and determined by any fixed laws. But we must not therefore conclude that such is the healthiest and most perfect state of the Church in regard to discipline. Indeed the very pastoral epistles themselves were a step in the direction of *Church Law.* The instructions in them tended, as far as they went, to control autocratic government, and to teach Timotheus and Titus that they were to rule the Churches committed to them, not according to their own will, but on fixed, and, as far as possible, definite principles. The canons of discipline, which rapidly grew up in the post-apostolic Church, were, many of them, the legitimate development of such principles; and great as the evils were that subsequently arose from the multiplication of such rules, and yet more from the misapplication of them, the condition of the Church without them would have been far more intolerable. Discipline,—for of that I am now speaking as distinguished from the purely spiritual functions of the episcopate,—is an action of the Church for its own protection, from which it is impossible, as the experience of centuries has proved, to eliminate altogether the temporal interests of men, and therefore whilst law is unsuitable, as we have concluded from Christ's teaching, either to govern the personal life of the Christian or to direct the functions of the ministers of Christ, yet in the exercise of discipline law is not only expedient, but even necessary for such organisation as shall be suitable

for man. It is in this action of the Church therefore, especially, that the State may legitimately afford its aid, not by adding temporal penalties to spiritual censures, but as being the ordained representative of law. But even the experience of eighteen centuries has not yet solved the difficult question how such aid may be rendered without some injury to the Church itself, either in one direction or the other.

A comparison of the instructions given in these pastoral epistles on the subject of discipline, with those which we find in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, indicates some distinctions, necessary to a solution of this difficult problem, which I shall suggest without attempting to discuss them fully. We have seen that every sentence on ecclesiastical offences is truly "*dis-*" "*cipline,*" σωφρονισμός, having for its end, on the one hand, the awakening of the conscience of the offender, on the other, the protection of the body from infection. There is in it nothing strictly penal, nothing of the principle which is the foundation of justice, "an eye "for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Its object is not, as the object of penal law is, to deter from offences by the fear of temporal punishment. Repentance is no satisfaction for the breach of penal law: whereas even the incestuous person at Corinth was restored at once on repentance. The administration of law in the Church therefore, even in matters of discipline, must be governed by different principles from those of criminal law, or of any law in the true and proper sense of the word. Church law is law so completely subordinate to higher principles than those of law, that nothing can be more fatal to the purposes for which it is required, than any attempt to blend and confound them. If the Church is to represent its Lord and

Master in the exercise of its discipline, it must be by such a combination of mercy and holiness, of jealousy for God's word and the largest charity, as has no place in law human or even divine,—such indeed as in all ages, and not without apparent cause, scandalises those who like the scribes and lawyers of the New Testament believe that law is the highest and best standard for human life.

Church laws then are nothing else than instructions, such as St Paul gave to Timotheus and Titus, only more definite and more fully developed: the object of them being, through such directions as may inform the conscience of the Church, to prevent unnecessary harshness on the one side and dangerous laxity on the other. But, as I have before observed, since the Church is a human society in the world, using worldly things for the purposes of the kingdom of heaven, it is quite impossible to separate its action from the temporal interests of men, of which the State is the appointed guardian. It is true that the effect of its sentences is simply to disqualify a man as a member of the Christian society, —to render him ἄτιμος in this society,—and such ἀτιμία, when the Church was unknown and unrecognised, would little affect men's social rights in the world. And yet, even in St Paul's days, the τιμὴ due to a Christian minister was something more than the mere respect and affection due to him from other Christians: and just in proportion as national and social life becomes pervaded with Christian elements, disqualifications in the Christian society must touch on the temporal life of man; and, in proportion as this is the case, the State must interpose. For the State, God's appointed guardian of men's secular interests, to surrender to the Church its own proper office, would be a

fatal injury to both. The harmony of the different principles, on which the State and the Church must severally act, cannot be obtained satisfactorily by any compromise on either side. And however wisely and carefully the relations may be adjusted, it seems impossible that sometimes, in exceptional cases, the different principles on which the State protects man's temporal interests, and the Church maintains those which are spiritual, should not lead to different conclusions. The only remedy against such a danger is that, wherever the conclusions are different, they should hold good each in their legitimate sphere and no further: and if this principle were once fully admitted on both sides, the difficulty of solving the problem would at all events be much diminished. The attempt to solve it, by allowing either the Church to override the State, or the State the Church, in the proper sphere of each, is tyranny or worse.

There is also another safeguard against arbitrary action in the matter of discipline, the elementary principle of which at least is suggested by the pastoral epistles, I mean what is understood by the *right of appeal*. For the fact in itself of St Paul, by virtue of those plenary apostolic powers which he received from Jesus Christ Himself, giving such instructions, as we have examined, to those who presided over the Churches in Ephesus and Crete, proves of itself that the bishops of those Churches were not autonomous or independent, but that abuses of their authority would have been overruled by the apostle. An actual instance of such interposition by one of the apostles of Jesus Christ occurs in a later apostolic writing, the third epistle of St John. That apostle mentions an ambitious man, Diotrephes, who having the pre-eminence in some

Church, not only refused to receive the brethren who went forth as evangelists amongst the heathen with letters of commendation from the apostle, but even prohibited others from receiving them, and cast out of the Church those who disobeyed his order. That such authority could have been exercised in the Church by any one to whom an office of authority had not been intrusted, the whole history forbids us to suppose. It is utterly inconceivable, that the words ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει could have been used of the act of any person without authority in the Church. But we too soon forget the instance of Judas, and imagine that no one appointed to a high office in apostolic times could be a Diotrephes. Here then, we must conclude, was an instance of an arbitrary exercise of power, such as unhappily has had many parallels in after ages. The remedy however then was simple and easy. "When I "come," St John calmly says, "I will remember the "works which he doeth." In the next Part of this work, when the completely developed organisation of the Church will be examined, we shall find what was the superior tribunal which took the place of the original founders of the Churches, the first apostles of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary to discuss the detailed instructions given by St Paul to Timotheus and Titus as to the general government of the Church. But we must observe that, in the whole administration, whether as regards the entering of widows on the Church list,—whatever may have been the purpose of this,—or the "*honorarium*,"—for that is evidently the meaning of the word τιμή in this case,—which presbyters should receive, the responsibility is supposed to rest with him who was the chief pastor. But that in all such matters,

he would act with the presbyters, or ἐπίσκοποι, their very title implies. Presbyters are indeed expressly described as presiding (προεστῶτες), sometimes indeed as presiding without labouring (κοπιῶντες) in the word and doctrine, although such presbyters are not to be regarded as fulfilling so honourably the duties of their office, the highest function of which is the active discharge of the ministry of the word. The language of St Paul is entirely consistent with that which, we know, in post-apostolic times was the form of government of each Church: the bishop, as he was then called, with his council of presbyters, determining all causes and questions that might arise; the concurrence or dissent of the laity being expressed in those days by methods which we cannot regret have been displaced in latter ages by more orderly and more rational expressions of opinion.

The Epistle to Titus, as distinguished from those to Timotheus, is chiefly important as regards our argument, as exhibiting a certain variety in the application of the fundamental principle of personal responsibility in Church government. It might be, and indeed has been, too hastily concluded from the epistle to Timotheus and other indications, that the charge of a chief pastor must be, in a settled state of the Church, limited to one city. Considering indeed the enormous population, in the first and second centuries of the Christian era, both of the chief cities of Roman Asia, and of the districts attached to each city, we are not surprised that what we should now call a diocese was in Asia so limited. But whilst both the epistles and acts of St Paul illustrate the disadvantages attending any very widely extended charge, yet the case of Titus proves, that there might be circumstances which would render it

unadvisable to confine the charge to a single city. Titus was left by St Paul in the island of Crete, as Timotheus was in the city of Ephesus, to complete the organisation of the Church, and appoint presbyters in every city. The fundamental law of the kingdom of heaven, which requires that the complete pastoral charge of a local Church with its presbyters should be intrusted to one person, and not distributed amongst many, does not determine the limits of the charge thus intrusted, though it implies that it should not be so extended as to render impossible to any man the exercise of all pastoral functions throughout its whole extent.

CHAPTER XV.

THE APOSTLE PETER.

ALTHOUGH the New Testament supplies but few details as to the acts and teachings of the various members of "the Twelve" after the ascension of Jesus Christ, the notices of them which it contains are sufficient to give a general and, as far as concerns the purposes of an argument, complete view of the history of the body. In order, however, to gain a clear idea of the whole question, we must notice first the several senses in which the Eleven, chosen and appointed by Jesus Himself, and Matthias, adopted into the original Twelve before the day of Pentecost, were apostles of Christ. First of all they were chief rulers and pastors of Christ's flock: in this sense, Barnabas and Saul, James of Jerusalem and probably Jude,—another of the Lord's brethren and the writer of the epistle bearing his name,—and subsequently Timotheus and Titus, were in the same class as the Twelve and held the same office with them. Of the apostolic office and ministry in this sense, the Seven originally and the presbyters generally partook with them in measure. Thus in the council at Jerusalem, that is in action for the general government of the Church, "apostles," (including at all events James of Jerusalem) "and presbyters" formed the *βουλή*. Apostles in this sense are *πρεσβύτεροι* and *ἐπίσκοποι* of

the first order. Again the Twelve were also apostles, in the sense of being supernaturally gifted to reveal the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as no other men were. In this sense, as we have seen, St Paul was co-ordinate with them. And we have also found that others received in measure that spirit of revelation, by which the truths of the Gospel were made known. The prophets of the apostolic Church were in this respect only second to apostles. In this sense the Church is built on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" not *τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν προφητῶν*, but *τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν*, as if the two belonged to the same class though of different orders. But lastly the Twelve were the apostles of Jesus Christ in a sense quite peculiar to themselves, and in which not even Paul shared their office; that is, as having been taught and trained in personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus during the days of His flesh, and having been eye-witnesses of the great facts of His life and death. On their testimony, given by men to historical events, the One Faith of the Christian Church rests. And in this sense they alone are, next to Jesus Christ Himself, the foundation of the Church: which is symbolically represented by St John when he says, that the wall of the New Jerusalem has twelve foundations, and on them the names of the Twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Now the history of the Twelve was, as it were, mapped out beforehand for them in the definite instructions which they received from Jesus Christ. "Ye "shall be," He said to them, "witnesses to me in "Jerusalem, and in the whole of Judæa and Samaria, "and unto the end of the earth." This special office of giving witness to the things which they had seen

and heard appears continually in their teaching,* and it was because Matthias was qualified to fulfil this function of the apostolic office that he was enrolled with them. For some seven years after the ascension of Jesus Christ the Twelve fulfilled this office at Jerusalem, according to their Lord's command. Then we find Peter and John sent to Samaria by the other apostles, who must soon after have gone forth to their labours, for when Saul first visits Jerusalem, some three years afterwards, he finds there, of the original Twelve, only Peter; and the apostolic journeys of Peter himself through Judæa and all those parts are recorded in the history. Then follows the extension of the Church to the Gentiles, and from that time the notices of the original Twelve become very few and interrupted. One of them, James the brother of John, was put to death by Herod Agrippa; Peter and John still appear from time to time; but the rest entirely disappear from the history and from the other apostolic records; for that the James and Jude, the Lord's brethren, who wrote the epistles, were not of the Twelve, we have already concluded. That all the rest of the Twelve were actually scattered about the world because their names are not mentioned, we need not suppose. The Gospel written by one of them, St Matthew, wherever written, is evidently intended for Jews. Some of them, perhaps all, were at the council at Jerusalem: but we only ascertain the names of Peter and John there. St Peter is also mentioned in the Epistle to the Galatians as visiting Antioch, and of him as well as of St John we hear further from their own writings, but of the rest our assurance that the Lord's commission was fulfilled by them is their history. It is important to notice also

* *E.g.*, Acts, iii. 15; iv. 20, 33; v. 32; x. 39-42.

the indications that the particular office intrusted to them of being witnesses of "Jesus and the resurrec-" tion" was ever prominent in their teaching. St John begins his first epistle by that special testimony which he and others of the Twelve were able to give, through personal intercourse with the Word of life manifest in the flesh, which testimony is the foundation of the faith. St Peter also in his first epistle, written from Babylon to Christians in Asia Minor, describes himself as not only a fellow-presbyter with the presbyters of those Churches, a pastor of souls in common with them, but also as being, what none of them were or could become, "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." In the second epistle, addressed to Christians generally, he dwells on this yet more fully. The time was then drawing nigh (he reminds them) when he should lay aside his mortal tabernacle, according as the Lord Jesus Christ had shown him, warning him that he should be in his old age bound and led to execution. The knowledge of this speedy termination of the ministry he had received made him anxious while he yet lived to write and remind Christians of the great truths of their common faith. "And," he adds, "I will "endeavour that also at all times ye may be able after "my departure to keep a memory of these things." It is evident from what follows, that by the things of which memory was to be kept St Peter meant primarily the facts of Jesus Christ's life and death, for he proceeds to remind them that "we" (that is the original apostles) "did not follow artfully devised fables, when we made "known to you the power and presence of our Lord "Jesus Christ, but we did so as having been admitted "to be eyewitnesses" (ἐπόπται, initiated spectators) "of "His Majesty." And of this he gives an instance—

namely, when they were with Him in the holy mount, and witnessed His transfiguration, and heard the voice from heaven declaring Him to be the Son of God. St Peter evidently therefore regarded it as specially his own office, with the rest of the Twelve, to give testimony of this nature,—that is, testimony derived from the evidence of the senses,—to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But what did he mean when he used the words, "But I will endeavour that also at all times ye "may have it in your power after my departure to "exercise the memory of these things" (*σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἑκαστότε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον τὴν τούτων μνημὴν ποιεῖσθαι*)? It is evident that we cannot interpret this of his writing the epistle, because it is something additional. Nor can it refer to something that he would do after his death; for the argument is, My work is nearly ended, therefore I now write this epistle to you, and I will take other measures to secure that after my death the remembrance of these things shall not pass away. Whatever other meaning these words may have,—for indeed the purpose of all the ministries and ordinances of the Church is, first of all, to enable Christians in all ages to keep the memory of these things,—I cannot but think that the apostle had chiefly in mind that Gospel, in which, according both to the tradition of the early Church and to the strongest internal evidence, we have recorded by "Marcus "my son," as St Peter calls him, the testimony of the leader of the Twelve to the facts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. And this view of the apostle's meaning is confirmed by his proceeding at once to speak of "the word of prophecy," the prophetical Scriptures of the Old Testament, as a light preliminary to the full dawning of the Gospel day. The inspired records of

the Old Testament are of great value, but the whole glory of the Gospel must be kept in memory in the Church by records, yet more precious, of the facts which confirm, and which are necessary to expound, what prophets of old have taught of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow.*

But now let us turn from considering the general fulfilment of their Lord's instructions by the chosen Twelve, to that, of which we found so many indications in the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ; I mean the organisation of the select and divinely endowed body. In this the only question that requires to be examined is that of the primacy of Peter. For we know too little of the history of the rest, to trace other results of the organisation after the Ascension, beyond the facts that James, one of the first four, soon was baptised with Christ's baptism of blood as the Lord foretold, and that John, also one of the leaders of the Twelve, appears several times with Peter in prominent action, and ultimately, after Peter's death and at the close of the apostolic period, shines forth with the glory of a new and final Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The leadership of Peter however among the Twelve, which was assigned to him by the Lord Himself, was, we have found, very conspicuous in the early history of the Church. That Peter was the chief and leader among all those whom the Lord had ordained to be His witnesses is a fact which no impartial reader of the first eleven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles will

* That the only possible meaning of ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον is that which is implied in the explanation above, is I think evident from the fact that the word βέβαιος with its cognate forms is in the New Testament used in the sense of confirming evidence by additional acts. See *e.g.*, Mark, xvi. 20; Rom. xv. 8; Heb. ii. 3. And the New Testament is also the ἐπίλυσις of the Old Testament prophets.

question. And at the close of his life, in his Second Epistle, as we have seen, he comes forth to deliver his closing testimony, almost as if none but he, the chosen leader of the chosen Twelve, could fully deliver that witness. In fact, on the death of Peter, the Twelve ceased to exist as a body, though individual members, as St John, remained. Thus the primacy of Peter, as established by Jesus Christ, in that body which was originally constituted by the Lord is historically evident: and the immense importance of that leadership, and also, we cannot doubt, of the general organisation of the Twelve, during the seven years when they were labouring together at Jerusalem and laying the foundations of the New Jerusalem, we may well understand. But the question which we have to consider is this, Did the primacy of Peter among the Twelve give him any authority, or even precedence, amongst those who in the other senses of the word were apostles? The negative is proved by repeated, distinct, and conclusive instances,—conclusive, that is, to all who use Scripture, not to establish a preconceived theory, but as supplying the evidence from which the true constitution of the Church must be determined. It is evident for example from accumulated proofs that the apostleship of St Paul was in no respect inferior to that of the Twelve generally, and of St Peter in particular, although he did not partake of their office so far as it consisted in being an eyewitness of the great facts of Redemption. He distinctly asserts his own independence of the Twelve, and his being of co-ordinate authority with them, as an immediate source of the Revelation of Jesus Christ—however great other apostles were, "in conference," he says, "they added nothing to me." He founded, organised, and superintended Churches, without any authority

from Peter or the Twelve. When Peter came to Antioch, Paul rebuked him publicly for unworthy conduct in regard to the Gentile converts. He declares that Peter himself, and the other apostles at Jerusalem, acknowledged that, even as Peter had received from Christ the apostleship of the circumcision, so had he received the apostleship of the Gentiles. And, as we have already seen, not only was Peter's work, as apostle of the circumcision, overshadowed by the greater labours of the apostle of the Gentiles, but his primacy among the Twelve gave him no priority even amongst those who not being of the Twelve, and not being apostles in the sense in which St Paul was, were the chief pastors of the Church. That James had the precedence in the Church action at Jerusalem, that he then spoke as the representative apostle, can be denied by no one who has not to maintain the theory that Peter's primacy was universal. And if we are to conclude that the fact of Peter's name always standing first among the Twelve, indicates, as it does, his primacy among them—we must also conclude, when James is named by St Paul first of the pillars of the Church at Jerusalem, that Peter had no primacy in regard to him. And if we infer that Peter was the representative leader of the Twelve from the fact, conspicuous in the Gospel history, that he spoke and acted in their behalf; we must also infer, from St James at Jerusalem taking on himself to pronounce the decision on the question there discussed, that he held, with regard to that assembly of apostles and presbyters, a position of the same kind as was assigned to Peter amongst the Twelve.

As soon therefore as we draw the distinctions necessary to be observed as to the apostolic office, and the

special functions of the Twelve, we have no difficulty in distinguishing the true limitations of the primacy of St Peter. But we must not forget that, (as we have already concluded in considering the Gospel history), there were certain principles indicated in that primacy, which concern the permanent order and constitution of the Church, and which are very apparent as that order develops itself. One is a fundamental law of the kingdom, which, as we have seen in the apostolic history, determines the organisation of each Church; namely, that the responsibilities of the pastoral office are a personal charge, and cannot be distributed. The other is, that, in the organisation of the Church, a certain order among those who hold the same pastoral office in its completeness is as necessary to its action as is a distinction of offices. James, the Lord's brother, presiding at Jerusalem the mother Church, stands out distinctly as first among many who held the same office with him. Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus, were all invested with the same pastoral office in its integrity, yet they did not hold the same rank. The importance of this principle however in the constitution of the Church cannot fully appear until its organisation is matured.

CHAPTER XVI.

RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE OLD ECONOMY.

THE questions to be discussed in this chapter will bring us again to the border, if not within the limits, of the sphere of doctrinal truths, into which our argument itself does not enter. But although the Church is constituted, as we have seen, for the development of the knowledge of truth, and not as the result of the development, and therefore its functions and order must be capable of being determined independently of doctrine as distinguished from the one faith,—yet doctrines will so powerfully react upon the constituted order of the Church, that the very same order becomes modified in practice, and certainly assumes in the mind a very different character, according to the doctrine with which it is associated. It is therefore hardly possible to represent fully and correctly the evolution of the Church out of its primary laws, without occasionally touching on some doctrinal questions, respecting which the minds of Christians are much divided. It will be well however briefly to notice what is the origin, and what are the necessary limitations, of such differences amongst those who hold the one faith and profess to derive their doctrine, that is the exposition of the faith, from Holy Scripture. They originate in the very nature of spiritual truth, and the inherent incapacity of

the human understanding to deal with it as with subjects that are strictly knowable by the human mind. We have seen that the faculty by which it is apprehended is rather an æsthetic perception than a logical process; and the consequence is that the same truth, even when expressed in identically the same form, calls forth in the mind of one very different sentiments from those with which it is associated in the mind of another; and the same original truth also leads to different forms of expression. The results will be legitimate consequences of the original underlying truth, or otherwise, according as the αἴσθησις is true and rightly cultivated, or according as it is defective or vitiated. In dealing however with questions into the application of which Christian sentiment enters, as it does very largely into some on which we must now touch, it will be absolutely necessary to the completeness, and indeed to the very purpose, of our argument, to avoid drawing any inference from such sentiment,—whether we consider it legitimate or illegitimate,—because it cannot be made the subject of reasoning, and therefore there can be no termination to discussions founded upon it. We must exclude all those influences arising from the temperaments of men, whether common or personal—whether *idola tribus* or *idola specus*, in Bacon's language—which hinder them from regarding the matter before them in a "dry light," and lead them to determine theological questions not according to the evidence, but from religious feeling, which, although the surest of all guides when it is itself true, is by no means to be trusted in proportion to the vehemence of its own self-assertion. The necessity for these precautions will appear as we proceed.

We have already noticed that the kingdom of Christ,

of which His Church is the present phase and the representative on earth, is not merely prefigured by the kingdom of David, but is the actual continuation and fulfilment of David's kingdom. Not only was David a figure of Christ, but Jesus was the Son of David. The theocratic kingdom is indeed the only organisation of the old economy that is perpetuated in Jesus Christ; for the Levitical priesthood was but a foreshadowing of a higher office, and passed away, having fulfilled its purpose. But the kingdom, though it died down to its root, so as to be as to its organic life wholly contained in Jesus Christ, sprang up from Him in a new organic form, and in a higher sphere of human life, yet still the selfsame kingdom, even as man rising from the dead is identically the same man. It is therefore no mere metaphor that the Church is the kingdom of David. In it are already fulfilled the words of the angel to Mary, "The Lord God will give unto Him the "throne of His father David, and He shall reign over "the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom "there shall be no end."

The religious organisation, which proceeded from Christ as the Sovereign of this kingdom, we have traced from its first elements until it has grown into forms definite in their type, though not as yet wholly matured, or capable of being so, until the supernatural action which aided and determined their development shall have passed away. Some essential differences between this organisation of the kingdom of heaven and all which belonged to the old economy we have already examined. A new and spiritual law of succession has superseded that of natural descent. Generally, in the kingdom of heaven we pass out of the sphere of law, determining by rules and what apostolic writers

call "a carnal commandment," fenced in by prohibitions and penalties, into that of a divine order which is the expression and outgrowth of principles. And further inasmuch as this kingdom of heaven, although in the world, is yet not of the world, as its sphere of authority is in the spiritual life of man and not in those things which directly concern his temporal interests, it differs from the original kingdom of David in leaving its own subjects also members of those earthly kingdoms which were ordained of God to be the ministers of law, and subjects to law and to the authority of the State, even as other men are.

Before passing to other questions, we may observe here how irrelevant certain arguments are, which are sometimes drawn from the Old Testament history, in which it is assumed that Christian sovereigns hold the same relation to the Church as David and Solomon, for example, held to the religious organisation of their day. For the kingdom of David was ordained for other purposes, and therefore with other functions, besides those which belong to the civil magistrate, as indeed the language of the Old Testament itself indicates. The earthly elements in the kingdom were but temporary, and, as it is continued in Jesus Christ, it is not coincident with the dominion of the civil magistrate at all, nor is it exercised in the same sphere of human life, nor has it the power of the sword. We must not confound together organisations which are essentially distinct, instituted for different purposes and on different principles. Such confusion has led, at one time to the Church claiming authority in temporal matters, at another to the State exercising power in spiritual things, and it is difficult to say which of these is more fatal to the liberties and best interests of men. For a divine ordinance,

when used for other purposes than those for which it is given, is in such use far from divine.

There is indeed another view of the relation of the kingdom of David to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which appears to be held in a general way by many Christians, and which deserves some consideration. While they allow that the Christian ministry and the civil power are distinct organisations, and that it is unchristian for the one to assume the functions of the other, yet they regard both as being parts of the same kingdom of Christ, at least when the civil power is Christian; the kingdom of David being differentiated, under the new economy, into the Christian State and the Christian Church. But this theory, although it has much to recommend it to the mind, and is in some form or other peculiarly acceptable to English theologians, receives no confirmation from the teaching of Christ and His apostles. The fact that He has redeemed all earthly things, and that He is set as "Head over all "things," including all the kingdoms of the world, "to "His Church," does not make these co-ordinate with the Church or a part of the kingdom of heaven. The blessings and powers of that kingdom lie in a wholly different sphere, and it is instituted for different ends from those which are contemplated in the State. An earthly kingdom is the empire of law, the kingdom of Christ is the dominion of the Spirit, of life, truth, and love. The kingdoms of the world could become the kingdom of heaven only through a process in which their own distinctive functions should melt away and disappear; in which love should be substituted for justice, life for law, an inward spirit for outward rules. That such is to be the ultimate result of the Gospel dispensation we may conclude both from prophecy and

from other considerations; but "we see not yet all things " put under Him."

Whilst therefore all "the powers that be" are the ordinance of God and His ministers, in their own sphere, no less certainly than the apostles themselves were, and whilst we learn from the Old Testament that it belongs to sovereigns to "rule all estates and degrees " committed to their charge by God, whether they be " ecclesiastical or temporal, and to restrain with the " civil sword the stubborn and evildoers,"* yet we must conclude that those only, who bear office in the Church according to its spiritual order, are the administrators of the kingdom of the Son of David, the purpose of which kingdom in its present phase is, as we have seen, to bear witness to the Truth, that is to Jesus Christ come in the flesh, the mystery of godliness. But here a question arises which the previous considerations do not enable us to solve. The Old Testament teaches us that David and his son Solomon ordered the service of God, built the temple, and exercised a general authority in religious matters, their highest personal functions also being conspicuously religious,—that of David as the Psalmist of Israel, of Solomon as the Preacher. But the distinctive religious organisation of the law,—the Aaronic priesthood,—was neither abrogated nor altered by the establishment of the kingdom of David; nor had David or any of his successors authority to exercise any of the peculiar functions of this priesthood. Uzziah, presuming on his royal office to burn incense in the sanctuary, was punished for his disobedience to the law. The services of the sanctuary were administered exclusively by priests of the family of Aaron. So that at first sight it would

* Art. 37.

appear, that there could be no relation whatever between the ministry of Christ's kingdom and a sacerdotal economy. For, if the King of the seed of David were not by his office a priest, it would seem to follow that the kingdom of David cannot have priestly functions.

This question is discussed and determined in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Jesus Christ was not a priest, in the sense in which the sons of Aaron were priests. He did not succeed to their office, as He succeeded to the throne of David. He came of a different tribe, "of which no man gave attendance at the altar." Indeed the law, under which they served, had no power by the sacrifices, that were offered continually, to make those who used it perfect. The repetition of the sacrifices proved that there was no real propitiation for sin, nothing which could cleanse the conscience. A High Priest therefore, to be suitable and sufficient for man, must be of a different order. Such was Jesus Christ, who was consecrated for us,—according to the everlasting covenant, which preceded that on which Aaron's priesthood was founded,—to offer the sacrifice of Himself once for all, through which sacrifice we are cleansed and sanctified to God. Of this the ceremonial offerings were faint adumbrations, but they had nothing whatever of the reality. The Levitical priesthood could not be the seed out of which that of Jesus Christ was to be developed, but it must wholly pass away with all that appertained to it, in order that this new priesthood might be founded on other principles, and with higher promises, and by a different law.

In Christ then the regal and sacerdotal office is united as it could not be in David himself. That in His Church also functions properly belonging to

the priestly office are exercised, we might infer from the fact of His being the High or Chief Priest, which title implies a subordinate priesthood of the same order. And of this we are expressly assured by apostolic teaching. St Peter reminds Christians that they are "being built up, as a spiritual house, into an "holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices accept- "able to God through Jesus Christ;" and again that they are a "royal priesthood." St John says, "He "hath made us a kingdom, priests to God and His "Father."* In order however to discern the force of such language, it will be necessary to examine with some care into the true and distinctive functions of the sacerdotal office.

These are briefly summed up by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the following words;†— "Every high priest, being taken from among men, is "ordained on behalf of men in those things that relate "to God, in order that he may offer both gifts, and "sacrifices for sins;" that is, both offerings generally, and specially, under the Law to which the apostle is referring, sin-offerings. The office of the ἀρχιερεὺς differed from that of the ἱερεὺς in some important particulars, but the writer's description applies generally to the sacerdotal office under the law. Now the Scriptural history of sacrifice sufficiently proves that the first idea in sacrifice, as is confirmed by the etymology and use by heathen antiquity of the word θύω, was that of an offering made to God, although the fact, that the highest offerings were effected through the death of a victim, indicated even from the time of

* Rev. i. 6. βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ is the reading of all the earliest MSS. and versions.

† Heb. v. 1.

Abel another truth underlying this, namely, the necessity of a propitiation for sin. This truth, which the consciousness of sin, deepening with every advancing age, in heathenism perverted into monstrous and unholy forms,—it was the special office of the Mosaical law to unfold and expound. And it must be observed that the complete exhibition in the Mosaical economy of the propitiatory nature of sacrifice was simultaneous with two other developments, which were intimately connected with it and with one another. The first of these was the revelation of law properly so called,—by which the whole economy was governed, and which made the necessity for propitiation more apparent; the second was the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, which was ordained with special reference to this expiatory purpose of sacrifice. "We may almost say" (the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews observes), "that with blood all things are purified according to "the law, and that without pouring forth of blood "there can come no remission of sins." There was however another truth expressed in sacrifice, which appears before the law, and which heathenism also either inherited from primeval tradition, or learnt from religious instincts common to the human race,—that of communion with Him, to whom the sacrifice is offered, by eating of the sacrifice. So that, without entering into details, we gather that the office of the Levitical priesthood was instituted with reference to the three following elements in sacrificial actions. First, to the expiation for sin, made typically and ceremonially by the death of the victim and the shedding of blood. To this the Law gave new meaning and emphasis, especially, —as the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us,—by the sin-offerings for the whole people on the great day of

atonement, when the high priest entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice; by which it was intimated, that the way into the presence of God must be opened for sinful man by an atonement offered and presented by one consecrated by God Himself to the office of high priest. Secondly, to the priestly office it belonged to present to God the free-will offerings of men; through the ministry of the priest the people offered their gifts on the altar: and, especially, the daily and other periodical burnt-offerings through priestly ministration represented the dedication of the whole people to the service of the Lord, and the smoke of the sacrifices ever rose up as a testimony before God. Thirdly, the priests who ministered in the sanctuary ate of all the sacrifices for sin with one solitary exception, namely, that sin-offering the blood of which was carried in within the veil. The words with which Moses rebuked the sons of Aaron for neglecting this part of the priestly office, are instructive; "Wherefore," he said, "have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the "holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath "given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congrega-"tion, to make atonement for them before the Lord?" * There were indeed some sacrifices of which others besides priests partook, such as the peace-offerings and the paschal lamb. But neither of these were offerings for sin, and the latter (as we have seen †) was not a sacrifice in the true sense of the word, inasmuch as no offering was made to God therein.

It is unnecessary here to discuss the teaching of the New Testament as to the fulfilment of the functions of the office of high priest by Christ Himself. It is sufficient to observe that in one respect they are so

* Lev. x. 17. † Part II. Chap. XI., p. 172.

fulfilled, as in the nature of things to be wholly incapable of being either continued or renewed. The inadequacy of the Levitical sacrifices as an expiation for sin was proved by their repetition: the reality and sufficiency of Christ's one propitiatory sacrifice of Himself by its being offered once for all. Human language indeed cannot explain, nor human thought compass, what atonement for sin is; every attempt to render it intelligible to the human mind on the theory of compensation, or of the self-sacrifice of love, or any other, must utterly fail, even as every attempt to explain the mystery of sin itself fails. It is a spiritual fact, the nature of which it transcends the powers of finite minds to explain further. But whilst the meaning of the truth transcends human thought, yet the truth itself, as a spiritual reality, is so fundamental to the Gospel of Christ, that it must necessarily determine all development both in Christian doctrine and in Church life, and also must affect and modify all Christian language. The office of the priest and the act of sacrifice, under the law, were so intimately and inseparably connected with the idea of propitiation, that we might expect that these terms would not be transferred to Christian ministries and ministerial acts, without considerable modification, and without such explanation as should secure against a misinterpretation which would be contradictory of Christianity itself; namely, that the sacrifice of Christ, once offered, was not a sufficient atonement for sin.

If this is borne in mind, we have very little real difficulty in discovering the relation between the organisation of Christ's Church through its ministerial offices, and that of the Jewish economy through the Levitical priesthood. For, first of all, the fact that Jesus Christ

has made, once for all, complete satisfaction for sin has completely put an end to the distinctive feature of the Levitical system, which was to exhibit the necessity for some further sacerdotal act to enable man to have access into the presence of God: as regards the atonement for sin all Christians are equally priests, and the offerings of each disciple need no priestly act beyond that of Jesus Christ to make them acceptable to God. But we must remember that the truth, that Christians are "a royal priesthood," no more hinders that sacerdotal functions should belong to certain members through whom the priesthood of the whole body should be exercised, than the promise, made to the children of Israel* before the Sinaitic covenant, that if they obeyed God's voice they should be unto Him "a kingdom of "priests," was affected by the institution of the Levitical priesthood for its peculiar functions. The argument often drawn from St Peter's language, as if it contradicted the priestly character of the Christian ministry, proceeds on the false assumption that all Christians hold the same office: when we once admit that there is one body but many members, the sacerdotal character of the kingdom of Christ must be allowed to afford the strongest conceivable proof that the ministerial functions exercised in the body must be sacerdotal functions. For the priesthood of each Christian concerns only his own relations to God through Jesus Christ: it gives him no functions with regard to others. But office in the Church implies, as we have found, authority to act as the representative of others, and as the instrument of the organic acts of the body of Christ: and to deny that such acts are sacerdotal is to deny that Christians are a priesthood. This essential

* Exod. xix. 5.

character of the apostolic ministry was evidently in St Paul's mind, when he used strictly sacerdotal language to describe his labours. He reminds the Romans,* that the grace of God was given him, in "order," (he says) "that I should be the minister" (λειτουργόν) "of Jesus "Christ to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest" (ἱερουργοῦντα) "the Gospel of God, in order that the offering (προσφορά) "of the Gentiles may be acceptable, being "sanctified in the Holy Ghost." And when elsewhere † he speaks of the preaching of the Gospel by him as a "sweet savour" to God, it is an allusion either to incense, which it was the office of the priests to offer, or, as is much more probable, to the sweet-smelling savour of the sacrifice of Christ which the knowledge of Him, communicated by His ministers, causes to rise up to heaven. Further, as the prayers and praises of all Christians are really sacrifices, being offered through Jesus Christ, therefore the ministerial act of him, who according to his office is the voice of the Christian congregation, is a real sacrifice: and, as we present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, therefore the ministerial act by which our bodies are consecrated to God in baptism must be in some sense a sacerdotal act. The office of the Christian priest indeed, as we have seen, is not based on law nor fenced in with prohibitions, yet it is part of a holy order for the fulfilment of the purposes of that kingdom, which is sacerdotal in its very nature. And St Paul therefore, without reserve, compares the ministry of the Gospel with that under the law. "Do ye not know," he asks the Corinthians, "that they who offer the sacrifices" (τὰ ἱερὰ ἐργαζόμενοι) "eat of the things of the temple: that they who wait "at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so

* Rom. xiv. 15, 16. † 2 Cor. ii. 14-16.

" hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the " Gospel should live of the Gospel." * The argument from the analogy would have no force, unless the offices compared were the same in kind, however great the change may have been in passing from the ministry of the letter and of condemnation to the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness.†

The personal priesthood of all Christians, and at the same time the ministerial priesthood of those who are ordained to bear office in the Church, are in no act of the Christian life so distinctly exhibited as in the Lord's Supper, which is indeed the most complete image and expression of that life. We have already seen that this rite was instituted by Christ as the actual continuation in the kingdom of heaven of the Passover. That ordinance was not so much a sacrifice as a participation with a sacrifice, and it was antecedent to the Aaronic priesthood and to the giving of the law. But the idea of expiation was undoubtedly included in the Passover, and was represented by the blood sprinkled on the lintels in its original institution. Its very name, *Pesach*, expresses the effect of the expiation in the passing over of the destroying angel.

And although the Paschal rite, and not any Levitical sacrifice, was the root out of which the Lord's Supper sprang, yet the analogy between the Christian ordinance and the Mosaical rites is distinctly marked in apostolic writings. St Paul ‡ expressly compares our participation of the bread which we break, and the cup which we bless,—of the Lord's table and the Lord's cup, —with the act of those in " Israel after the flesh," who eat of the sacrifice, and thus partake of the altar.

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. † Cf. 2 Cor. iii. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 17, 18.

Indeed the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews carries the argument still further, and reminds us that, whilst under the law even priests were forbidden to eat of that sin-offering the blood of which was taken within the veil, we all partake of the body and blood of Him whose blood is taken into the true sanctuary, and who bore the curse upon sin, suffering on the cross without the gate.* It will be observed however that these passages, in which no impartial mind can fail to recognise a parallel between the Lord's Supper and the Jewish sacrifices, refer to those acts in the Christian ordinance in which all alike partake.

But whilst all expiatory acts have been once for all accomplished by Jesus Christ, the one High Priest, and whilst those acts of eating and drinking, by which the sacrifice of the death of Christ is represented, are common to all Christians, who are therefore more truly priests than any who served under the law; yet when the Lord's Supper is regarded as being, what it certainly is, an organic act of the body, the ministerial functions, which in the nature of things must be performed by one for all, are undoubtedly sacerdotal. These functions consist, we have seen in considering the institution,† in blessing, breaking the bread, and giving to all the bread and cup as the body and blood of Christ. And εὐχαριστία is of itself a sacrifice; breaking the bread, and distributing the bread and wine, were acts of Jesus Christ Himself, our High Priest, in regard to His own sacrifice of Himself, and therefore are far more truly sacerdotal than any performed by the Levitical priesthood. There is no necessity for imagining that of which Scripture contains not the remotest trace, the institution by Christ of a distinct sacerdotal

* Heb. xiii. 10-12. † Part II. Chap. XI., p. 170.

order to perform sacrificial functions, as the law made priests; the Christian ministry derives its sacerdotal functions on different principles altogether. The minister of the Gospel possesses them because, on the one hand, he is appointed to act in behalf of Him who is our High Priest, and who by His one sacrifice of Himself has taken away our sins; on the other, because he is ordained to be the organ by which the corporate action of the Church, which is a kingdom of priests, is exercised.

In this question, which I have endeavoured to state in all its breadth as Scripture itself represents it, the spiritual truths, which pervade and quicken the subject, are regarded by different minds in very different aspects, and give rise to the widest conceivable differences among Christians. To discuss these differences would be wholly beside the present argument. I would only observe that all questions, both as to modes of expression, and as to contrasts or analogies with the Mosaical economy, must be governed and determined by two principles; first, the sufficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ as the propitiation for sin; secondly, the reality of the ministry of reconciliation ordained by Christ. These two principles are often brought into contradiction with one another in human teaching. The Church of Christ is constituted on both.

There is another point of comparison between the Levitical and Christian ministry on which St Paul touches in a passage which has been already quoted,* as proving that the analogy was, in the mind of the apostle, more than a figure of speech. The Levitical ministers, he reminds the Corinthians, lived of the Temple; they were supported from the various sources of rev-

* See p. 531, *supra*.

enue that came in to the Temple; and it is Christ's ordinance that the ministers of the Gospel should in a similar manner live of the Gospel. The latter expression is one of large import; there is nothing whatever to limit it to the free-will offerings of individuals, called forth by preaching the Gospel to them. It represents the whole effect which the Gospel produces on man, which is as truly expressed in endowments for the support of the ministry, and in the action of Christian States, as in the voluntary gifts which from time to time are cast by individuals into the treasury of God.

Another subject, which in the opinion of many belongs to this question of the relation between the two economies, is that of the ritual of the Church. It appears to me however a mistake to place the question of Christian ritual on this ground. In fact from the first we have seen that new forms would be needed for the new life, and the nature of these cannot be determined by that of the old forms. There is no need to complicate the question by comparisons which can only lead to uncertain or false results. But I may here make all the remarks on the subject which our argument requires. We have already found the fundamental elements of Christian ritual in the acts and teaching of Christ and His apostles. They consist first in the Lord's Prayer and the ordinances of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, instituted by Christ Himself; then in the apostolic laying on of hands; in a form embodying the one faith contained in "the name of the Father and of "the Son and of the Holy Ghost;" and in the observance of the first day of the week as the memorial of the resurrection. Out of these all true Christian ritual must be developed, and it is merely suitable clothing for these elementary types. But as we are examining

into the true constitution of the Church, and not into any variable or accidental forms which may be evolved out of this constitution, no ritual beyond that which is essentially a part of this constitution belongs to our present subject. Ritual, in its ordinary sense, bears the same relation to its fundamental elements mentioned above, as the whole system of Christian doctrine bears to the one faith. In each case, it is the Christian αἴσθησις or ἐπιγνῶσις that must produce the legitimate development. As regards ritual also, experience and the different habits and feelings of different nations must guide the Church in determining what is, and what is not, a legitimate and suitable expression of spiritual truths. Thus ritual language and actions, used at one time in the Church without danger, may have become in the process of time so associated in the minds of men with some perversions of the truth,—for example with doctrines denying the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for sin, or with those that substitute outward observances for inward holiness,—as to be unsuitable and dangerous in a later age. And in different nations, the same external acts are the expressions of very different mental conditions, and these different races will express very differently the same mental states. Even in the same nation there are considerable differences of temperament amongst men, and whilst a common ritual ought to be such as to be adapted to the ordinary national temperament, it will always appear to some in excess, to others in defect, of that which is required. But in such a question, the words of St Paul, when the Corinthians were led into disorder through the desire of giving free play to individual feelings and idiosyncrasies, are fully applicable; "God is not the "author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches

" of the saints." " What," he asks those who would sacrifice the order of the Church to individual feeling, " came the word of God out from you ? or came it unto " you only ?"

As regards however the relation between Christian and Jewish ritual, there are some considerations which indicate very distinctly a contrast between them rather than a resemblance. First, because the object of the latter was to testify that the propitiation for sin was not yet offered ; of the former, that it has been accomplished: Again, Jesus Christ Himself, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman respecting differences of religious worship,* teaches that the worship of His Church would be distinguished from that of Judaism, not merely by being in all places and not in Jerusalem only, but generally by its spiritual character, by being a worship " in spirit and in truth." This does not imply, either that the true servants of God under the law did not worship Him spiritually and truly,—for whose devotions in any age have been more really spiritual than those of the sweet Psalmist of Israel ?—nor again that under the Gospel forms are unnecessary,—for what prayer coming directly from the heart of man can equal in spirituality the form of prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples ? But it certainly implies a contrast rather than a resemblance between the Christian and the Jewish ritual. And this is further explained by St Paul in his Epistles both to the Galatians and to the Colossians, to whom he points out why Jewish ordinances are unsuitable to the Christian life.† First of all, and chiefly, because of the authority over the conscience assumed in them : they were the visible expressions of law, which Christ has fulfilled. But further, the

* John, iv. 20-24. † Col. ii. 16-23 ; Gal. iv. 3-10.

Mosaical ceremonies were "elements of the world," suited for the childhood of God's sons, not for their manhood. As children and illiterate persons are instructed by pictures and signs, unsuited for educated men, at all events, if used in excess, likely to obscure knowledge rather than to advance it,—so the Mosaical law taught its lessons by multiplied rites and ceremonies. But for the Church to teach its lessons by such a method would be to return to a lower sphere, and to keep God's sons in a state of childishness, instead of bringing them on to maturity. In this therefore discretion and judgment are needed to determine what is suitable, and what is not suitable, for manhood in Christ. But above all the Church must beware of attempting to enforce ritual as that which is binding on the consciences of men, instead of that which is required for order and for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom.

FOURTH PART

THE REVELATION

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FOURTH PART.

THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

"THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him," is so completely distinct from all other books of the New Testament in its style, its character, and its subject, that the necessity for considering it separately is sufficiently obvious That it records visions seen by the apostle John towards the close of his life, more than thirty years after the death of the apostles Peter and Paul, and some five-and-twenty years after the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity, I assume as sufficiently proved for the purpose of our argument. In that case, it is impossible not to regard it in connection with the words of Jesus Christ of the beloved disciple, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is "that to thee?"* For we found many and unmistakable indications that the destruction of Jerusalem was a real coming of Christ in judgment, to be followed by the complete development of the kingdom of heaven

* See Part II. Chap. XV. (3), p. 229.

on earth, in that form in which it was to subsist during the period of labour, trial, and conflict appointed for the Church of Christ. This book therefore is the consummation and crowning act of revelation, and in it we may expect to find those principles of the Church's organic life, which we have traced throughout the apostolic period, exhibited in their definite shape and matured form, and in consistent and distinct relations of the spiritual body.

The portion of the Apocalypse, which exhibits the Church as a visible organisation on earth, is but a small part of the whole; but it will be well before we proceed with our investigation to examine somewhat carefully the distinctive characteristics, and to some extent the structure, of the book, in order to obviate some difficulties, and clear the way for a more discriminating analysis. It would be wholly beside the present argument to discuss the various systems of interpretation of the Apocalypse, as a prophetical book in the ordinary sense of the term; but its character as a symbolical book, as representing mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in typical or emblematical forms, must affect all the conclusions to which it points. It is this which especially distinguishes the Apocalypse from all other apostolic writings, including those of St John himself; so much so, that to many it seems impossible that it should be the production of the same mind, or class of minds, as produced the Gospel and Epistles. It must be observed however that this difficulty assumes that the book was the result of some subjective process, and not, what it claims to be, the record of a revelation external to the mind of the writer. If the latter be the true state of the case, as any argument founded on the Christian Scriptures must assume, we have then no

difficulty whatever in supposing that a mind so profound, and yet so transparently clear, as that of the author of the Gospel and Epistles of St John, would be peculiarly receptive of the heavenly imagery described in this book, and specially qualified to record and transmit these symbolical representations. The fact that the apostolic office of St John is, in the Apocalypse, wholly merged in his higher office of the messenger of a final revelation from Christ to the Church, whilst his own personality, in this new office, stands out more distinctly than in his Epistles, is sufficiently accounted for, if we only accept the book as being what it professes to be. So also is the style of the Apocalypse, in which the aged writer, brought into scenery resembling that of the Old Testament prophecies, and recognising their fulfilment and realisation in that which he himself saw, naturally adopts the Hebraistic forms and idioms with which he was from his youth familiar, as the suitable clothing of prophecy. That the book is indeed worthy of one who was the most highly favoured disciple of Jesus Christ, no reverent student of Holy Scripture will deny. He finds in its symbolical language a depth, power, and significance, which, independently of any historical interpretation, impress him with the conviction that it is in the highest degree an inspired book. The harmony of the symbols with the teaching of Christ Himself, and with the doctrines revealed by the Spirit of truth through the apostles; the wonderful insight they imply into the typical language of the Old Testament; the preternatural beauty, originality, and boldness of much of the imagery, which has directed and quickened Christian thought and feeling in all succeeding ages, supply internal evidence abundantly sufficient to justify the Christian Church in receiving this book as that which

it claims to be, the fulness and consummation of divine revelation.

But one important proof of the true relation of this book to the rest of the New Testament appears to have been much overlooked; I mean, its connection with the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. For we have observed, in examining these, that all the acts, and almost all the language, of Christ Himself with reference to His kingdom on earth were in the highest degree symbolical and typical. He selects typical numbers,—twelve apostles,—seventy disciples to prepare His way. He gives emblematical names, Peter or Cephas, Boanerges. He describes the office and functions of the apostolate in symbolical terms; it is the rock on which He will build His Church; the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given them; they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The mysteries of the kingdom are set forth in parables, which are only a particular form of symbolical language. Indeed, when we compare the teaching of Christ Himself with that of His apostles, nothing is more remarkable than the symbolism of Jesus Christ's language, which no apostolic writer ever attempted to imitate, although we find imitations enough in post-apostolic and apocryphal writings, as for example in the Pastor of Hermas. The nearest approach in the teaching of apostles to the symbolical language of Christ is the comparison, —which is more than a comparison,—of the Church of Christ with the human body. But with what caution and elaborate argument is that great symbol gradually developed by St Paul, as compared with the freedom and confidence with which Christ Himself teaches by symbol upon symbol, as having intuitive and perfect knowledge of all the analogies between the natural and

the spiritual world. Others may by careful and guarded comparisons here and there trace out resemblances which gradually become apparent to the spiritual mind; our divine Master can with unlimited profusion, and yet with the most exact accuracy, accumulate emblem upon emblem, and parable upon parable, without any fear of the analogy being unsuitable or defective, or pointing, if it be rightly used, to any false and dangerous conclusions. Indeed symbolical language and symbolical acts are not suited to be used freely for conveying spiritual truth by any one who has not the Spirit of truth without measure, because of the extraordinary power which symbols exercise over the human mind. There is a marvellous pregnancy and suggestiveness, as well as vividness, in such language and acts: symbols that are really legitimate are living seeds of truth in the mind; whilst those that are illegitimate, containing some defective or distorted semblance of truth, rapidly develop numerous forms of error, which, appearing to be related to the truth through the symbol, influence the mind powerfully for evil.

We must observe however in what sphere of truth Jesus Christ employed the language of symbols. He uses it but rarely to expound moral or spiritual precepts. Such parables as those of the good Samaritan and of the rich man and Lazarus are not properly symbolical. Again in that higher sphere of thought, in which He reveals His own relations to the Father and the nature and virtue of His own mediatorial work,—although indeed all language, by which truths passing man's understanding can be conveyed to the human mind, must be in a certain sense symbolical, for these things can only be received positively into human conscious-

ness by means of things that are known, which bring our thoughts and affections and principles into true correspondence with the objective and unknowable realities within the veil,—yet it was not by parables that Jesus Christ expounded these profound mysteries. But whenever He would teach the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, that is, the laws of the relations between Himself and men, and of man with man, in that kingdom, He then invariably spoke in parables, and to establish these relations He performed His symbolical acts. This was, first, that His teachings might be ὠκέα βέλη φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν, intelligible only to those who had a heart to understand. But this reason for using emblematical language in His public teaching is evidently not intended as the complete explanation of the purpose of Christ in adopting it. He undoubtedly knew that this class of truths could be represented to the disciples themselves more fully and suitably in this form, than in any other: the relations of His kingdom indeed have much in common with those of the natural life of man; and the images used, being more perfect representations of the realities than any such images can be of those things that are purely spiritual and heavenly, are therefore more prolific of truth and less liable to be misused. At all events, whatever reason may be assigned for the fact, it cannot be disputed that Jesus Christ did, both in His teaching as to His Church and in the acts by which it was founded, express by symbolism principles which when developed by His apostles assumed a different form. We need not be surprised therefore when we find, in the final Revelation given by Jesus Christ to His servant John, the mysteries of the kingdom again embodied in symbolic forms. And it would be well if those, who question

the value to the Church of the symbolism of the Apocalypse, would ponder on the answer given by Jesus Christ to His disciples, when they asked why He spoke to the multitude in parables. Is it not equally true,—we might even say more emphatically true,—of the Apocalyptic teaching, that to the humble and reverent disciple it is the revelation of heavenly mysteries, whilst to others it is only a veil that conceals them from their view; "seeing they perceive not, and "hearing they do not understand"?

We may notice a further resemblance between the teaching of Jesus Christ by parables, and that which we find in the Apocalypse; I mean, that sufficient explanation of the symbolical language is at first given, as is given of the parables of the sower and of the tares in the field, and we are then left to apply to the rest similar principles of interpretation. It is indeed from that portion of the book in which most of the symbols are translated into other language, that our conclusions will be drawn.

Another peculiarity in the book, besides its symbolical language, is the symmetrical and so to speak artistic structure of the whole. It is indeed the perfection of symbolism to use natural forms and images artificially, and not, as in a picture, to group them naturally; for thus the emblematic meaning of the whole is more apparent. And for the same reason, in all such representation, the symbols are often incongruous, and more or less unlike the natural objects themselves, in order that the mind may not lose the idea itself in the form that represents it. But the artistic structure of the book answers also another purpose. It corresponds with a philosophical classification in any branch of natural history, which classi-

fication is not merely an artificial aid to the memory, but gathers together under several heads with due arrangement and subordination those objects or phenomena which are most truly related to each other, by the aid of resemblances such as ordinary observers perhaps may not notice, but which really connect together things externally very different.

When we proceed to examine the Apocalypse carefully, we are met by the very notable and significant fact, that its basis and its sphere are *Church life*. It opens with an address to "the seven churches which "are in Asia." These are symbolised in a vision, in which the Son of Man appears walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands, and holding in His hand the seven stars; and the stars are explained to be the angels of the seven churches, and the candlesticks to be the seven churches. This final Revelation of Jesus Christ therefore presents Him to our view as the Royal Priest superintending and ordering a Church system. The seven Asiatic churches are evidently taken as a microcosm and miniature representation of the Church universal, a specimen selected as the type of the whole. To these the whole book is addressed. In reference to them the Spirit of God is represented in the symbols of the book as sevenfold, as seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God, and seven eyes of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And at the conclusion of the book, the divine Revealer says that those things which are revealed are testified in the churches (ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις), the churches on earth being the sphere in which the things would come to pass.

We need not here dwell on the emblematical description of these representative churches, and of the

portraitures of Church life given in the seven epistles addressed to them. These pictures of the Church system as fully developed at the close of the apostolic age, and recognised by the testimony of Christ himself as the legitimate representation of His kingdom, will require a separate and most careful examination, for here, if anywhere, we shall find the crown and top-stone of our argument.

From earth, when all Church life had been thus portrayed, and the sentence of Jesus Christ had been passed on its several features of good or evil, the Seer is taken up in Spirit to heaven, and there he beholds a very different scene. On earth the Church had been exhibited as a human organisation, blessed with the presence, and governed by the authority, of the Son of Man, its Lord and High Priest. But in heaven the manifestation of Christ in His Church appears free from all sin, infirmity, or error, in those typal forms in which only the Spirit of Christ is embodied, and His mind only reflected. In the innermost court of heaven is seen the eternal and self-supporting Throne, from which spring the seven fountains of the Holy Ghost and of fire, by which the Church is baptised, and which kindle the light of its seven stars. Round the divine Throne are seated on subordinate and dependent thrones the four-and-twenty Elders, the senate of heaven, the heads and representatives of the whole family of the redeemed, of that General Assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are enrolled in heaven, unto which Christians have come.* In the midst of the Throne, which is also the seat and source of life in all its forms, is a Form which in visions of prophets had never before

* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

appeared: "A Lamb as it had been slain, having seven "horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits "of God sent forth into all the earth." He receives divine honour and worship from the heavenly host, from the redeemed, and from all creation, and alone is able and worthy to open the book of the divine purposes and read them.

This emblem of the Redeemer exalted to the right hand of power has in its main features been reflected in Christian thought to the present day. But it ought to be noticed that it represents not simply Jesus Christ Himself, but Christ in His kingdom which is personified and contained in its sovereign. In the prophecies of the Old Testament the kings or kingdoms of this world,—for a kingdom can only be personified in its king,—were symbolically represented, as different kingdoms still are in modern language, by emblems taken from the animal creation. Babylon was a winged lion; Persia a bear; Greece a leopard; Rome a monster with teeth of iron. And Judah was a lion, and, as the kingdom of David is perpetuated in Jesus Christ, He is "the lion of the tribe of Judah." But His emblem as sovereign of the kingdom of heaven is a Lamb, not like the emblems of worldly power standing on the earth, or coming up out of the sea of men's tumultuous passions, but standing in the throne of God. The fundamental truths of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the actual subsistence of the whole kingdom of heaven in His sacrifice, are represented in this emblem far more vividly and more completely than mere words could express them. And while the Paschal Lamb is enthroned in heaven, on earth the Passover is kept in His Kingdom.

To this Sovereign of the kingdom of heaven it

belongs to open the sealed book, and in successive symbolic scenes the divine purposes and their results are gradually unfolded. In these scenes different typical forms, the correspondence of which with the teaching of Christ and His apostles is sufficiently obvious, represent the various conditions, and the conflicts and principles, of His Church.

Out of the twelve tribes of Israel, a typical number, 144,000, are sealed with the seal of the living God. They are preserved through all the severest trials, and at last appear as a great multitude that no man can number, gathered out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, and clothed in robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, with the palms of victory in their hands, and praising God and the Lamb for their salvation.

In another scene the Temple of God with the altar and those that worship therein is measured by divine authority. The outer court is left unmeasured and rejected, being given to the Gentiles, who, during a typical period, tread the holy city under foot. Meanwhile, during the same period, God's two witnesses prophesy, clothed in sackcloth; and although put to death, even as their Lord and Master was, during a brief symbolical period, they rise from the dead and ascend to heaven in the presence of their enemies.

Again, a woman is seen clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head. She is "the mother of all them "who keep the commandments of God and the testi- "mony of Jesus Christ." She is persecuted by a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, each of its heads being crowned with a diadem. Her son, who is hereafter to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,

is caught up to God and His throne. The woman, who flies into the wilderness, is persecuted with her children through a typical period, but is preserved by the providence of God, who makes the earth itself to aid her against the enemies.

Meanwhile, during all these conflicts in which the several types of evil which assail the Church appear under various symbols, the Lamb stands on Mount Sion, and with Him the 144,000, the redeemed of the Lord, without any stain of earthly pollution, praising Him in spiritual songs which none but they can learn.

Lastly, when all conflicts are accomplished, New Jerusalem, the city of God, the mother of us all, is seen coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband. The glory of the city is as the glory of God; on her twelve gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and on the twelve foundations of her walls those of the twelve apostles. In the city are all spiritual blessings proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and into it nothing can enter that defileth, but only they who wash their robes.*

I have already intimated that the interpretation of these symbolical scenes is unnecessary for the purposes of our argument. Indeed, the more we meditate upon them, and contemplate the realities here revealed, the more deeply must we feel that no human interpretation can be adequate to exhaust their meaning. But two points will be noticed by every thoughtful student—first, that there are many indications that the

* Rev. xxii. 14. *Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν.* The restoration of this reading, which is that of the Sinaitic and Alexandrian MSS., is one of the many advantages which would be derived from a revised text of the New Testament.

Church is, notwithstanding the infirmities of its members and the mixture of good and evil in its elements, the earthly representative of the heavenly realities; secondly, that those in the Church, who are in spirit that which they profess to be, alone in the divine mind are the substance of the Church. Thus, whilst the twelve apostles are the foundations of the New Jerusalem, as of the Church on earth, and the seven stars of the Churches correspond with the seven fountains of fire before the throne, and the city here set on a hill is the earnest of that which is to come, and the temple of God built up by the ministry of the word is the counterpart of the true sanctuary,—yet there is no mingling of good and evil in the heavenly ideals. A comparison of the epistles to the seven churches with the vision described in the seventh chapter sufficiently illustrates both the connection, and the distinction, between the earthly and the heavenly types. In the former, the Israel of the New Testament is exhibited in its earthly form, with its trials, imperfections, and sins; and promises of spiritual and eternal blessings are given to each one who overcomes. In the latter, those out of this Israel, who are indeed the elect of God and sealed with His seal, are prophetically represented as having gained the victory and enjoying the blessings.

We must now return to that with which our argument is concerned in this book of divine symbols, the representation which is here given of the Church of Jesus Christ on earth, the scene of all those conflicts which are to issue in a universal reign of truth, righteousness, and peace.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

I. — The Angels of the Churches.

THE symbols which are employed in the opening vision of the Apocalypse to represent the Church system there portrayed are explained by the divine Revealer Himself, and we ought therefore to be able to determine their meaning without having recourse to any doubtful conjecture. But one part of the explanation itself is at first sight ambiguous. In the vision seven stars are seen in the right hand of the Son of Man, and the interpretation given is that "the seven stars are the "angels of the seven churches." Now the word ἄγγελος, though used ordinarily in Holy Scripture of those celestial spirits who are the messengers of heaven, yet of itself implies nothing more than one to whom a message is intrusted, and in that sense is used of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.* The corresponding word in the Hebrew is used by the prophet Malachi,—whose own name means "My angel,"—of the priests of the old dispensation, and of Jesus Christ Himself, as the messenger of the new covenant.† To ascertain therefore whether here we are to understand heavenly spirits, or men to whom, as to John the Bap-

* Matt. xi. 10; Mark, i. 2. † Mal. ii. 7; iii. 1.

tist and the priests under the law, this title is given as the ministers and messengers of God, we must look a little further both into the emblematical representation and into the interpretation which is supplied in the epistles to the churches, each of which epistles is addressed, it will be observed, to the angel of the church.

In the symbolical imagery, it is not at once obvious what is the connection between the stars in the right hand of the Son of Man, and the seven candlesticks. We must not indeed be surprised at the apparent incongruity between stars and candlesticks: such incongruities are, as I have observed, necessary to the very perfection of symbolism. But the incongruity must be in the natural forms, not in the ideas they symbolise; and the purport of the vision being to exhibit the Son of Man superintending and ministering to the golden candlesticks,—as Aaron ordered the lamps on the candlestick in the sanctuary,*—and the stars being not a mere accessory and incidental detail, but a main element in the representation, how do these subserve the purpose of the vision? The only answer that can be given, as it appears to me, is that the stars are the intermediates between the Son of Man who holds them in His right hand, and the light in the golden candlesticks to which He ministers. That is, they represent the *means* through which He supplies and maintains the light. We have already observed also that they are evidently related in the imagery of the book with the seven lamps of fire before the throne, which are the seven spirits. They are indeed expressly associated with them in the epistles: "These things saith He that "hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars."

Again, when we turn to the epistles to the churches,

* Levit. xxiv. 3, 4.

we find that the angel in each church, who is one related to it as the star is to the candlestick in the symbols, is addressed as being *persona ecclesiæ*, one in whom the personality of the Church is represented, even as in the prophecies of Daniel, and elsewhere, the kingdoms of the world are represented and personified in their kings. The angel is not the Church, nor is the Church the angel. Yet the epistle to the Church is addressed to its angel. In him its character, its excellencies, its sins are so reflected, that all the responsibility centres in him. His acts and the acts of the Church itself,—that is, not of some members but of the Church corporate,—are so identified that they cannot be separated. The angel is to the Church what the head is to the body, of which it is the chief member, but one with the other members in all corporate acts.

Now we may safely affirm, that neither in the symbolical representation, nor in the exposition of the symbol in the epistles, is there a single point which is consistent with the angels of the churches being heavenly spirits, or which is not satisfied by understanding them to be men who are sent of God to be His ministers in the Church. Indeed that they are not the angels of heaven is sufficiently indicated, one would think, by the direction given to St John to *write* to them. A written revelation,—and it must be observed that throughout the Apocalypse much stress is laid on the book being a written record,* that is, *Scripture*,—is intended for men, not for heavenly spirits. But far more fatal objections lie behind this. The idea of angels, in the ordinary sense of the word, being interposed between Jesus Christ and the Church, as the

* Cf. i. 3, 11, 19; ii. iii. (τῷ ἀγγέλῳ γράψον); x. 4; xiv. 13; xix. 9; xxi. 5; xxii. 18, 19.

medium for communicating the light of His truth, as those through whom He teaches and governs His Church, and whom He addresses as one with the Church in a common corporate life, is not only destitute of any support from the New Testament, but is directly at variance with its teaching. The angels of heaven are indeed ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation; but not in the sphere of the spiritual life of man. The dispensation of the law was by the ministry of angels; the economy of the Gospel, in which the man Jesus Christ is Lord, is through the ministry of men.* Besides which, these angels of the churches are subjects of the responsibilities and duties, the infirmities and sins, the trials, temptations, and punishments, of which men are subjects; they are in a state of probation, hearers and receivers of Christ's word, liable to self-deceit as to their spiritual condition, and capable of repentance. They are therefore men of like passions with us, redeemed by Christ, and living under the dispensation of His Gospel; indeed it is a contradiction and absurdity to suppose that any but men could be identified, in regard to their works, with the churches, which are human societies. It is hardly necessary to add anything else to these conclusive proofs; but I may observe further that only on the supposition of the angels of the churches being men, are the epistles addressed to them of the slightest ethical value to ourselves. Indeed the theory of a "guardian angel" of each church, responsible for the spiritual condition of the church, and therefore in some sense determining that condition, and yet out of the reach of our humanity, with no common ties and relations, is a demoralising theory; far worse than fatalism, because the being,

* Cf. *e.g.*, Heb. ii. 2, 5, 16; Gal. iii. 19; Acts, vii. 53.

who is supposed thus to form the spiritual character of the Church although it is not in corporate union with him, is both fallible and sinful. The whole Gospel would have to be rewritten on such a theory, and all the promises made to Christ's Church to be reversed.

On the other supposition of the angels of the churches being men sent of God, as were John the Baptist and the priests of old, the whole is consistent with the rest of the New Testament and with itself. We must however examine carefully into the truth which is here represented, and trace its connection with the fundamental laws of the organic life of the Church.

The question has been often raised, whether, and how far, a body corporate, a nation, a church, can be said to have a conscience, and the attributes of personality, when it is composed of distinct personalities.* It is certain however that both in Holy Scripture, and in the common language of men, we find this personification of human societies, with the assumption that moral responsibilities belong to them,—in other words, that there is a common and corporate will by which corporate acts are determined. Such a common will may be considered as being, in mathematical language, the resultant of the wills of the various members of the society, according to the force which each possesses. But the will is not a mere mechanical force; a public will is not merely a result; it reacts powerfully on the wills of individuals, and directs and modifies these, as if it had a separate existence of its own. In fact, it is in a society as the truest philosophy teaches us that it is in every individual; the will is not merely the resultant of all subordinate motives, but it controls and regulates these, and ultimately is self-determined.

* See Part III. Chap. XIII., p. 434.

Now the angel of the Church is that person who holds such a relation to the Church that he truly represents its personality, being by his office the personal exponent of its common will, and thus determining its corporate acts. In the State, the king is the personification of his kingdom, in such a sense that all corporate acts of the State are acts of the sovereign; and this is true not only in a despotism, in which arbitrary caprice takes the place of public will, but much more really in those governments in which the personal will of the sovereign, and the will of the community, are brought into harmonious concurrence by reason and law. But in the Church the relations of the members of the body corporate are more intimate, and the representation therefore of the Church's acts in one person is more complete. To understand this we must revert to principles as to the organisation of the Church which we have before concluded from the teaching of Christ and His apostles. We have found, from the first revelation of the Church as a society in the words of Jesus Christ,* to the last acts and instructions of St Paul in his pastoral epistles, that the true organisation of the Church is by the responsibilities of the apostolic office being personal, and by each person who is invested with its functions becoming a centre of organic life, his action, however affected by the action of other members, being ultimately self-determined. The one person to whom, as to James in Jerusalem, to Timotheus in Ephesus, to Titus in Crete, the pastoral charge of the local church is committed under Christ, both possesses in their entirety the functions of the ministry ordained by Jesus Christ, and is empowered to convey them to others. All the functional and administrative action

* See Part II. Chap. III., p. 102.

centres in him, as that of the State does in the sovereign, however the positive exercise of powers of government may be limited in certain directions by the laws, that is the fixed order, of the Church. The corporate acts of the Church are his acts, and he is far more really responsible than any ruler of the State can be, because the first purpose of his office is to inform and to direct, by the Word of God, the consciences of those who are intrusted to his charge. For that end he is also endowed with powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, unless he suffers them to lie dormant, cannot fail to exercise a mighty influence for good over the conscience, the extent of this influence indeed being only limited by his own faith and by the objects for which his office is instituted. So that he is really, and not by some fiction, responsible for the spiritual condition of the church intrusted to his charge, and his own character will necessarily be reflected in the acts and state of that church. And there is this immense difference between the relations of such an one to the other members of the Church, and that of the "guardian angel" of which some dream; that whereas, in the latter case, the influences would be something behind the scenes and beyond our reach, in that relation which really exists in the Church the influences are such as act on the minds of men by moral and reasonable motives, in accordance with the principles of man's rational being; exercised by one who is subject to the same sins and temptations with ourselves, and a partaker of the same salvation; who is also himself really a member of the body, and therefore as certainly influenced by the other members as he influences them. The relation being mutual, the responsibilities which grow out of that relation are necessarily common.

An analysis of the principles underlying the language of the Apocalypse, leads us then to the conclusion that in each church being addressed through one person, who is responsible for its acts, it is implied that, according to the true organic structure of the Christian Church, each local church which forms an integral unit of the whole body has one who, by virtue of his office, personifies and represents that Church. To this high office in the Church the title of "angel" is given in the mystical language of the Apocalypse—not as if such were the technical title of the office—Revelation deals not with names but with realities; but because it expresses the fundamental idea of the office. The word ἄγγελος differs from ἀπόστολος only in the idea of the mission being more prominent in the latter, that of the message to be delivered in the former. The latter term was more appropriate, therefore, for those whose mission was received directly from Christ, and whose testimony to the faith needed the confirmation of signs and wonders, as proofs that they were sent by God; the former more suitably describes those who, though no less truly commissioned by Jesus Christ, yet are conspicuous rather by their message of mercy, than by any visible proofs of their divine mission.

The symbolism of the vision is entirely in accordance with this office of the messenger of God to man. For it is through the ministry of those to whom the Gospel is given in trust as the message of truth and love, that the Church is enabled to be the light of the world. Through these stars, who are appointed to be like their prototype John the Baptist "burning and shining lights," Jesus Christ replenishes the flame on the candlestick of His Church, the light in the stars being itself derived from the seven lamps before the

throne, the seven Spirits of God. We need not inquire what else may be implied in the emblem: in the interpretation of symbolism the one thing needful is to lay hold of the leading idea which is represented.

I would only observe in conclusion that the ordinary ecclesiastical designation of the office symbolised in this vision would have been unsuitable and insufficient as the interpretation of the emblem. An epistle to the Bishop of the Church in Ephesus would have been a personal address to the individual, as St Paul's epistles to Timotheus were;* the epistles to the angels of the churches address them as the representative persons of the Church. And although the ἄγγελος is emphatically a person, and to explain it as a body of pastors would be not only to do violence to the language, but to contradict a fundamental law of the Church's organic life, yet so far as others partake, in their several measures, of the functions of the apostolic ministry which one holds in their entirety, so far are they also included. Indeed, so far as every member of the Church contributes, according to his office and spiritual gifts, to the common work of the Church, so far that which Christ says to one He says to all—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

II.—The Churches and the Church.

In examining the symbolical representation of the Christian Church in the vision of the seven golden can-

* It may be observed, however, that the identification of the Bishop with the Church is an idea which the Christian mind soon recognised. Thus the epistle of Clement, Bishop of Rome, to the Corinthian Church, is entitled, "From the Church of God which is in Rome." The epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp, "Bishop of the Church of Smyrna," contains instructions to the whole Church, as well as to the bishop himself. But it is only in ideal language that the identification can be complete.

dlesticks, the first question which presents itself is obviously this, What is the purport of the particular symbol which is here taken to represent the Church? Elsewhere the Church is a temple, a body, a city, a kingdom: and each of these forms points to certain purposes, relations, or conditions of the Church. The temple, for example, represents it as that in which God is present to be worshipped; the body, as the fellowship of Christians with Christ and with one another. But the golden candlestick (I use this word for λυχνία in default of any other at all suitable) evidently exhibits the Church in a different aspect from all these, as a divine ordinance for holding forth the light of life. The symbol carries us back to the elementary teaching of Jesus Christ as to the first principles of His kingdom. "Ye," He said to His disciples, "are the light of the world. A "city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither "do men light a candle (λύχνον) and place it under "the bushel, but on the candlestick (λυχνίαν): and "it giveth light to all that are in the house. So "let your light shine before men, that they may see "your good works, and glorify your Father which is "in heaven." Thus the first teaching of Jesus Christ as to the office of the Church as a visible body, and the last revelation of His mind are the same. The Apocalypse only exhibits the original truth in its complete development.

This office of the Church, to be the framework on which the light is set, evidently includes that which St Paul describes, when he speaks of the Church as "the pillar and ground of the truth." But the light, both in Jesus Christ's teaching, and in the Apocalyptic vision, is more than faith and doctrine. In the Sermon on the Mount it is to shine forth in good works, which

men may see, and glorify God. In the Apocalypse every epistle from Him who watches over the light in the golden candlesticks commences with the words, "I know thy works." These works, however, it will be found on examining the epistles, include all acts by which the faith of Christ is asserted, and purity of doctrine maintained, or the contrary. Indeed, in the life of the Church, whose office it is to witness for Christ, such acts are pre-eminently its works.

Another question, which naturally arises as to this portraiture of Church life, our previous investigations will also enable us to answer completely. It may be asked whether this portion of Holy Scripture merely describes the actual Church system which existed in Roman Asia at the time when the epistles were addressed to the Christians there, or whether it exhibits the true normal type of the Church's organisation. If the former were the case, we could merely conclude that such a form of Church life was possible and legitimate, but that it might be only one form amongst many. But all the conclusions which we have deduced from the acts and teaching both of Christ Himself and of His apostles have pointed in one direction; they have indicated fundamental principles of organisation, which have gradually developed themselves into forms, becoming more definite as we proceed, in perfect accordance with those laws of development which science itself determines. We have also found that Christ Himself directed His disciples to a time not far distant, within the lifetime of some of them,—for which He specially intimated that the life of St John would be prolonged,—when the kingdom of God would come with power, and His Church would take on earth the place of the Old Testament polity. We have also in

the Apocalypse itself the most emphatic indications, that the scene portrayed, however true historically, is typical, a representation of typal forms of Church life. We cannot therefore but conclude, that we have here depicted the very forms into which the elementary principles of Church life must necessarily grow, unless they are hindered by some counteracting influences; that here are revealed by Him, without whom nothing was made that is made, the true results of that Genesis of His Church which began in His incarnation and was completed in His revelation. During those days of the new creation all things were being constituted in due order, until the work was accomplished.

When we now turn to contemplate the scene presented to our view, in order to discover the true normal type of the Church's constitution, one conspicuous feature of this Church life at once strikes us, as being intimately related to principles which we have already examined; I mean that the several churches are local or territorial. The practice of distinguishing each separate portion of the universal Church by the city or country in which it was planted, is common in the writings of St Paul; indeed his rebuke of the Corinthian Christians for calling themselves by party names is a condemnation of the principle which any other distinguishing title would imply. Different modes however of describing the local churches are found in the New Testament. We find, "the church in Jerusalem;" "the church through the whole of Judæa;" "the "church of God that is in Corinth;" "the churches of "Galatia," "of Judæa," "of Asia," "of Macedonia;" "the church of Thessalonians," "of Laodiceans." In the Apocalypse we find "the churches in Asia," and (according to the best MSS.) each of the local churches

is the church *in* the city in which it is planted. It appears therefore that when the churches in a country are spoken of as a whole, they are often called the churches *of* that country; otherwise the preposition is generally used which implies local habitation. The force of one of the other forms we shall consider hereafter. But all the titles equally imply, that in the same place there is but one community which is the Church; one golden candlestick of the Lord; one star in His right hand. And the identity of the society in every place is expressed by its having everywhere the one name common to the whole and to every part, "The Church." This latter peculiarity in the constitution of Christ's kingdom is one with which we are so familiar that we do not observe its significance; but there is nothing analogous to it in an earthly kingdom, and it evidently indicates a fundamental difference between the organisation of the Church and the State, which we shall have to consider.

The principles which are most obviously implied in this description of the Church are its catholicity and its unity, which indeed, as we have observed in another part of our argument, are but different forms of the same principle.* The conclusions, which we then drew from the truth that there is one body and one faith, follow equally from the Apocalyptic language. For, in order that a society,—in Ephesus, for example,—might be truly called "*the Church* in Ephesus," two conditions are essential: first, that all things necessary in order to be a Christian shall be required of a man to be a member of that society; secondly, that nothing shall be required for this beyond that which is necessary for a Christian. For without the first, the society

* Part III. Chap. XIII., p. 450.

might include those who are not Christians; without the second, it would not comprehend all who are Christians. And by "Christians,"—or in the language of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, "disciples,"—are meant all who are brought into the state of salvation by baptism and the confession of the faith, and are not authoritatively excluded from that state for open and notorious sin, or do not separate themselves from the communion. No community, fellowship in which is not open to all men on the common basis of Christianity, can claim the title of *the Church* in such and such a place. This question, it will be observed, is distinct from that of the organisation and order of the Church, although it is intimately connected with it, because the Church as an organised body is the appointed witness to the faith, and the guardian of it. And the stars in Christ's right hand are His angels or messengers in the Church and in them the Church is personified. But we must not encumber the simple idea of the Church, as the communion of those who are consecrated to Christ, with the question to whom the spiritual charge and the government of the flock are committed by Christ.

We must however examine the principle of the unity and catholicity of the Christian Church from another point of view, to which the Apocalyptic description directs us. We have observed that whilst, in the language both of Christ Himself and of the apostles, the whole body of disciples or Christians everywhere is spoken of as "the Church," yet apostolic writers speak of Christians in a particular country as "the Churches" in that country. But whenever they would describe the body of Christians in a single city,—even in Jerusalem where, shortly after the day of Pentecost, there

were five thousand disciples, — it is always "the "Church," never "the Churches," in that city: the use of the singular indicating that common corporate life of Christians dwelling in the same place, which is represented in the office of one possessing all the permanent functions of the apostolate. Every part of the universal Church, when thus completely organised, becomes itself a Church, one of the units of which the whole is composed, even as every world in the universal cosmos of nature is itself a cosmos. And, we must observe, this combination of the Christians in one city into a definite body, and the distinction of the several bodies, — the differentiation of the Church into the Churches,—was a process necessary according to the fundamental laws of all development of organic life. At the same time the separation was no division,—which would be dissolution not development,—because the Churches still were the Church, the several bodies were one body, and through the apostles all these several local societies,—each being complete in itself,—were mutually related and interdependent one on the other. But as the original apostles, whose functions were not limited to any portion of the Church but universal, passed away, how was this connection and mutual relation of the Churches to be maintained? One answer is obvious; I mean, by all being under one Lord, Jesus Christ, by all partaking of one Spirit. But those, who have followed our investigation of this subject in the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles, will want no additional proof, that the Son of Man exercises His authority and produces results in His kingdom through human instrumentalities and agencies, in a manner suitable to the nature of man as a social being. Those who imagine effects in Christ's

Church without means adapted to produce them imagine a monstrous and unnatural condition of the Church, not the body of Him who was made man.

But have we not, in the Apocalyptic representation of the Church, indications of that developed organisation, which would be the result according to the laws of the Church's organic life of the original apostolic body passing away, and would take the place of that body in its constitution? Undoubtedly we have; and however obscure such indications may seem to many,—even as to superficial observers of nature its most certain laws appear but indistinctly indicated,—yet to those who have carefully followed the argument from Scripture they will be perfectly clear and sufficient. It may be added, that they are entirely in conformity with those conclusions to which we should be led by deduction, if to this question we should apply those laws of evolution which are necessary in all existences that fall within the range of human knowledge. Indeed it will be useful to consider what these conclusions would be, before we examine farther into the meaning of the apocalyptic language.

The first law that is necessary, in the evolution or development of any such existence, is that it shall be effected through processes of concentration. For example, the progress of the human race in civilisation has been by families — the family being the true natural unit of human society—being united in the local community; civil communities in the state; petty states in the empire. And the mode by which these several processes are effected, and the forms in which they result, are decided by external circumstances, under the influence of which the principles in human nature, which tend to such unifications, de-

velop human society. Our argument throughout is, that those powers acting on man which tend to unite him in Christian fellowship, although in their source they are supernatural, yet affect him in no unnatural manner, but must issue in processes subject to the same fundamental laws of development, as those which govern the results of forces which are strictly natural.

Let us observe then how far we have traced in the history of the Church the operation of these spiritual forces. We have seen that their result has been to produce in every city a Church united under one head,—the Church being there the representative of the universal Church, the presiding pastor of the apostolate. But what has determined this definition and limitation? Not merely the local proximity, but also, undoubtedly, the social relations of those who are united in the same civil community. It is the Church, not only "in Thessalonica," but "of Thessalonians;" not only "in Laodicea," but "of Laodiceans." That is, the relations of civil society, though in themselves external to those of the Church, yet being part of that human life the whole of which is redeemed by the Son of Man, do so far direct the processes of the Church's development, that a completely organised Church, composed of the citizens of one city, is their first result.

Now, as soon as the next process in the development commences, that is, when the same tendencies to Christian fellowship as have formed these local Churches go on to produce combinations amongst these Churches and to gather them into groups for the purposes of Christian society, we should expect to find the civil and political relations of men similarly directing the process, and determining the particular combination

which would be assumed in this next stage of development.

This conclusion, to which we are led by deduction from principles already established, is confirmed so distinctly and emphatically in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, that it could not have been overlooked, as it is by most expositors, if the question of the true organisation of the Church had been examined by them scientifically. The seven Apocalyptic Churches, though recognised by all thoughtful students of Scripture as representative Churches, are generally treated as if they had been taken at random from all parts of the world; and yet, if the only object had been to represent in them the universal Church, it would have been much more distinctly effected by such Churches as Rome and Corinth, Antioch and Babylon, Jerusalem and Alexandria, being united with Ephesus. But the Churches grouped together in the Revelation of Jesus Christ are not Churches scattered here and there over the world, but the Churches in Asia, that is, in the Roman provincial division, united under the government of one proconsul, to which the name of Asia was given by the Romans. Of this Roman province Ephesus was the first and greatest city, the metropolis of Asia; and, as such, Ephesus has also a priority among the seven Churches. In other words, the provincial organisation of the Church,—the province and its metropolitical city being determined by civil and political relations,—is here recognised by Christ's own authority as the true and legitimate development of the kingdom of heaven. There are, however, other considerations, necessary to the complete exhibition of this truth, which the Apocalyptic language very distinctly suggests. For the Apocalyptic Churches, although they are designated "the

"seven Churches that are in Asia,"* were assuredly not the only Churches in that populous province, in which, in the first century of the Christian era, there were some five hundred cities and towns. But the number seven was necessary for the symbolism; and these seven are therefore taken as representatives of all the Churches in Asia. The full significance of this mystical number in the symbolism of Scripture it is unnecessary here to discuss; but one peculiarity in it bears directly on our argument, and it is so distinctly indicated, that nothing is left to conjecture;—I mean, that a sevenfold division is not only consistent with unity but in this case expressly implies it. For in the Apocalyptic language the Holy Spirit, who is personally one, and expressly and emphatically One Spirit in the One Body, the Church, is yet united with the Father and with Jesus Christ as "the seven spirits before the "Throne;" and is symbolised by seven lamps burning there, and by the seven eyes of the Lamb, "which are "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The seven Churches in Asia therefore answering to this sevenfold Spirit,—the seven candlesticks to the seven lamps,—are the one Church of the province of Asia, even as the seven spirits are the one Holy Ghost. And similarly the seven angels, the seven stars in the right hand of the Son of Man, are not seven independent bishops, but one *episcoporum collegium.*

We are thus led alike by deductive reasoning, and by the suggestive symbolism of the Apocalypse, to this larger unification in the Church's organic life, namely of the Churches of the cities in the Church of the province. And it is now evident that this Church, the Church of the province, and not the local Church,—the Church

* ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ασίᾳ.

of the diocese in our language,—is the true and complete microcosm of the universal Church. For though the community of Christians in one place, with its bishop and presbyters, is in itself a complete organism, so as to be really the Church in that place, yet by itself it can neither maintain its own organic life nor fulfil all the ends for which the Church is ordained. Jesus Christ's own acts and teaching indicated the necessity of united action; He constituted not isolated apostles, but an apostolic body; the sphere of spiritual power is enlarged, He teaches us, in union. In the apostolic history the necessity for united action on a larger scale than is possible in each local Church has been exemplified in the assembly of apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem, and other facts and principles, established in our investigation of the history, have pointed in the same direction.* And, whilst the local Church by itself is incapable of fulfilling these conditions, the Church of the province contains all the elements necessary for this united action, and is therefore a complete type of the whole body. The federal union however of the local Churches must be such as not to enfeeble their internal organisation, but such as to strengthen it and render it more distinct and definite; for otherwise it would be no true development; besides which, each local Church having as its representative head one with all the permanent functions of the apostolic office, and there being no office, under Christ Himself, higher than that of the apostle, no new combination can create any new functions, however it may extend the sphere of action.

These conclusions are in entire accordance with the symbolical representation. The seven stars, which are the angels of the seven Churches, are in the right hand

* See, *e.g.*, Part III., Chap. XIV., p. 483, 506.

of the Son of Man. No office is interposed between Him and them. He addresses each of them singly and personally. And yet He holds them in His right hand, not as isolated individuals, but as a body corporate, "the seven." As being an organic body, there is an order amongst them as among the original twelve apostles, and one, the angel of the metropolitical Church, stands first. But there is no angel, or representative head, of the Church of the province, as of the local Church. And further it must be noticed, that in this representation the organic life of the Church is complete quite independently of John the representative of the original Twelve. He appears nowhere in the symbolism: his office has now become exclusively that of the medium through which the Revelation is made, and the instrument by which it is recorded for the instruction of the Church.

It would be impossible for words to express, as graphically and accurately as is here represented under symbols, the transition from the original constitution of the Church under the twelve apostles to the permanent form, in which the same office and order continue, whilst the results of the special functions of the Twelve are perpetuated in the records of Holy Scripture. The original typal form of the apostolic body, with Peter always first and chief yet holding no office different from the rest, now, when the organisation is matured, reappears in the "angels" of the Churches in one province, with one *primus inter pares*, the bishop of the Church in the metropolitical city.*

* It is not the purpose of this work to examine the actual fulfilment, in the history of the Church, of the principles determined from the New Testament; but I cannot help observing that the language of primitive Christianity reflects with wonderful accuracy not only the other principles which we are examining, but especially that of civil and political circum-

But before we leave this subject of "the Churches and "the Church," as illustrated in the Apocalypse, there is one question, of vital importance to the organic life of the Christian Church, which we must carefully consider. It is evident, that, in the extension of the Church's organisation beyond a certain limit, that is, beyond the sphere of the local Church which is the unit in the general organisation, there is a change of structure, for which we ought to be able to account from the fundamental principles of the kingdom of Christ. Up to a certain point, the administration is in the strictest sense personal; the proof of this, and the principles which establish it as a fundamental law of the kingdom, have become more apparent and have accumulated, as we have proceeded, and they have culminated in the Apocalyptic portraiture of each local Church, represented in its angel. But as soon as we pass from the smaller organism to the Church of the province, the personal element in the administration disappears, and we find confederate Churches with a certain primacy (it seems) recognisable in one, yet with no representative head of the whole body except the Son of Man Himself. How is it then, that whilst the personal element is essential in the local administration, in the larger combination it is no longer necessary or admissible? We might indeed content ourselves with saying that as Jesus Christ instituted the apostolate, and no office superior to that of an apostle, but merely a primacy of order among apostles, it was therefore impossible that the corporate union of Churches, the representative heads of which all hold the same apostolic office, should resemble the corporate union of

stances determining the form which the organisation of the Church would assume. See, *e.g.*, Canon Apost. xxvii.; Can. Antioch. ix.

those, who are members of the same body but with different functions. We cannot indeed reason from the one case to the other. And yet the answer, though it may seem sufficient, is not really sufficient, because it makes the constitution of Christ's kingdom rest on that, which unless it were required by the fundamental principles of that kingdom would be an arbitrary appointment. We must ever bear in mind that the kingdom of the Son of Man is no artificial system, nor need we suppose that the form which it assumes is determined by mysterious and unapproachable counsels of an unfathomable Will. The laws of the constitution of the Church are derived from the nature of man and the spiritual principles of the Gospel of Christ; and to obey those laws aright, we must not regard them as mere rules, but must apprehend their spirit and meaning.

Indeed, the necessity of the law in the organisation of the Church, which produces this change of structure, is very apparent when we examine into its meaning. Some simple and yet very sufficient reasons at once present themselves. The law, however complicated and artificial its action may seem,—even as the operation of some law of nature appears to the unscientific mind intricate and inconsistent with itself,—is nothing but the expression of very obvious and very necessary principles.

Of these the first is, that, in the kingdom of Him who is the Saviour of men, the highest function is, from the very nature of the kingdom, the pastoral care of the souls of men. The faithful servant, as described by Jesus Christ, is one to whom authority is committed in the household, for the purpose of giving to each his portion in due season. Greatness in Christ's kingdom can only be in proportion to the spiritual service administered to others. So distinctly and emphatically

is this truth asserted, both by Christ and by His apostles, —for example by St Paul, who, when he would magnify his office, describes it as the ministry of reconciliation, and who declares that the one work for which he was sent was to preach the Gospel,—that some have concluded that there can be no office in the Church higher than that of the presbyter, or ἐπίσκοπος of the second order; because, they imagine, all the functions necessary for the ministry of souls are possessed by him. But such a conclusion is entirely at variance with those which follow from the history and teaching of the New Testament. Jesus Christ called on His apostles to follow Him in the ministry of souls, and taught them by His own example that this ministry includes the calling, appointing, sending forth, and overseeing, of those who are themselves pastors of souls. He, who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, proved that these are really spiritual functions, directly bearing on the salvation of men, and necessary to the complete ministry of the kingdom. But Jesus Christ's example proved also that there can be no higher office, because He Himself when on earth exercised none other in His own ministry. During His lifetime the Twelve did not themselves possess the power of calling, sending, overseeing other pastors. After His ascension, their functions were those which He exercised during His earthly ministry, no less and no more. We are thus led to the two conclusions, which, however they may be obscured by misapprehensions and false reasonings, follow inevitably from the New Testament,—first, that the office of the bishop, in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, is necessary in the Church in order that the example of Christ may be followed, and all the functions of His ministry exer-

cised; secondly, that this office includes all the functions which can be vested in one man.

And, if we require a further reason for this law, we may observe that whatever functions of the apostolic office are of an administrative nature, such as the exercise of discipline, "setting in order the things that are wanting," and the general government of the Church, these cease to be spiritual functions, because they cease to be personal, when they exceed a certain limit. The government of a family by the father of the family is in the highest sense personal; his personal influence is, or ought to be, exercised on every member of the family. The archaic king, whose government was truly paternal, and whose personal judgments were instead of law, were kings on a very small scale indeed. But when the sphere of administration is extended, it can no longer be really exercised by a person, although it may be the expression of a personal will: it becomes a government through a *curia*, a *bureau;* or, if the liberties of those who are governed are to be preserved, a government by law, and therefore not personal. In the Church, the only government that is really spiritual is personal. Although law is necessary wherever temporal interests are involved, yet the government ceases to be spiritual in proportion as it is a government by law. On the other hand ecclesiastical authority, without law, degenerates into the worst form of tyranny, unless it is the result of the conscience of those who are governed being brought into harmony with the conscience of him who governs, for which personal influence and intercourse are necessary.

In short, that which limits the sphere of office in the Church, and renders it impossible that there should be

a higher spiritual office than that of the bishop of a local church, is the simple fact that there are certain limits to those human powers which have to be exercised in the cure of souls, and in administrative functions. Not only do the latter become unspiritual when their sphere is enlarged, but they soon encroach upon the higher and more purely spiritual sphere, until he who ought to be in the highest degree a minister of the Gospel of Christ has neither time nor spiritual energy left for those functions which are really apostolical. Unhappily we are in modern times so familiar with overgrown dioceses, that when the time of a bishop is almost wholly occupied with the accidents of government, instead of his being able to give himself continually to prayer and the ministry of the word, we seem to consider this the natural result of his being raised to high office in the Church; whereas, unless there were some departure from the true apostolical constitution of the Church, the very contrary would be the case. But, if this is the result of merely increasing the size of an ἐπισκοπή, how much more injurious to the spiritual life must be an extension of the sphere of the functions of government? The evils arising from an overgrown diocese may be remedied, at all events, by subdivision; but the ecclesiastical government of a province, much more of a larger sphere, is false in principle, and destructive of the true character of the apostolical office. The complaint of him, who lamented that his spiritual life became more impeded and enfeebled, as he rose from one dignity in the Church to another till as Pope he had, as he supposed, charge of the whole Church, argued no doubt his own spiritual consciousness; but it proved also that the system, the

tendency of which was to produce this effect, could not really represent the kingdom of heaven, but is in the nature of things unchristian.

It may be objected to these arguments for the necessity of a limited sphere for the pastoral office, that the original apostles had no limited charge of souls, but their commission extended over the whole flock of Jesus Christ. The sufficient answer is, that this peculiarity in the exercise of their apostolic functions was required for the first establishment of the Church, and in the infancy of the Church did not involve the same danger of the ministry of souls being absorbed in the functions of government. The peculiarity was limited by the lives of the first apostles, who possessed special qualifications as the eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ, and supernatural powers, in which those who succeeded them did not participate. How completely St Paul fulfilled the true ministry of souls by personal intercourse with all, is evident from his address to the Ephesian presbyters and from his epistles. "Ye know," he says to the Thessalonians, "how we exhorted and "comforted and charged *every one of you*, as a father "his children." But even St Paul, with all his gifts and powers, speaks of "the care of all the churches" * as a burden too heavy for him to bear, although the churches then founded by him were but a few in Asia Minor and Greece. And the fact, that, as the churches increased in number so that the apostle could not himself frequently visit them and hold personal intercourse with all, the charge of each was intrusted to one ἐπίσκοπος, is of itself sufficient proof of the necessity

* 2 Cor. xi. 28, ἡ ἐπισύστασίς μου ἡ καθ' ἡμέραν, ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. Observe it is not, ἡ ἐπισκοπὴ πασῶν τ. ἐ. Even St Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, did not claim this, much less St Peter.

for such limitations in the permanent organisation of the Church.

The general conclusion then to be drawn from this argument,—and it is a conclusion of the highest value, —is this; that the development of the Church of Christ must follow a different line from that which determines the development of any earthly polity, on account of the spiritual functions of the highest office possible under Christ in His kingdom. In a "kingdom of this world" it is not only consistent with its interests, but expedient for its government, that there should be throughout a subordination of its parts, and a corresponding gradation of offices, each being dependent on the one superior to itself, until they all culminate in the sovereign. But, in the true constitution of the kingdom of Christ, office, for the reasons which we have investigated, cannot exceed the limit which the Apocalyptic portraiture of the Church indicates,—that is, the ἐπισκοπὴ of a local church. Beyond that limit the law, expressly marked out by Jesus Christ Himself in the apostolic body, is a primacy among those who hold the same office, not giving to one any spiritual charge over his brethren, but necessary for the organic action of the Church in those legislative or administrative functions which cannot be, consistently with the principles of the kingdom, exercised by one person. Within the limits determined by the natural powers of man, the polity has the form of a monarchy; beyond those limits, there can be no sovereign but One who is God as well as man, and the administration on earth must be through the union of confederate states, with such organisation as may be necessary for the purpose of united action.

One further question here I would rather suggest

than attempt fully to discuss. The Apocalypse carries us as far as provincial organisation, and no further. Are we therefore to conclude that each province ought to be in all matters independent and self-contained; that there can be no larger combinations because this is the largest that the Revelation describes? This would be a very rash conclusion, and to adopt it would be to interpret the Revelation as one of mere facts, not of principles. For the same principles which produce organisation in one province not only may, but must, tend to other and higher combinations. And in examining the structure of the typal apostolic body,* we found it to be not merely one body with one primus, but a body with three divisions, in each of which one apostle stands always first. That is, there was both a lesser and a greater combination of those who form the units of the Church system. But it must be remembered that the larger combination, that is any that is larger than the provincial, cannot alter the units which are to be combined; for there is no representative person of a province as there is of a diocese. And, further, there is not the same kind of necessity for the larger combination, which there is for that of the churches in one province, because the primary combination of churches in one province supplies all the united action necessary for the maintenance of the organic life.

There is however one form of unification to which the principles we have investigated very distinctly point. If the civil and political relations of men determined the dioceses and provinces of the primitive Church, as indicated in the Apocalyptic language, we may be well assured that the relations of national life,

* Part II. Chap. II., p. 77.

which, especially in modern society, are the most powerful of all except those of the family, would legitimately produce an association of the churches in that nation or kingdom in one national Church. And any attempt to produce unifications, in which national relations shall be neglected or violated, indeed which shall not be directed and determined by national relations, is an attempt to constitute the Church on other principles than those of the kingdom of the Son of Man. But this question, and especially the modifications which would be necessary in the application of the principles indicated, open a large field of inquiry upon which I cannot enter.

III.—Church Life and its Conflicts.

We must now return from the larger combinations in the organisation of the Church to its primary organism, the unit in all combinations, namely, the local church symbolised by a golden candlestick with its star in Christ's right hand, which is the angel of the Church. And we pass now from the emblematical representation to the seven epistles, which, though clothed in typical or ideal language such as Jesus Christ often employed in His earthly ministry, yet describe actual scenes of Church life, the real actions and characters of men. They bring us also into the sphere of personal responsibilities, and really spiritual functions, that is, such as deal directly with the consciences of men. But, although Church life and the personal spiritual life are intimately related, yet they are not identical; and for the present we must confine our attention to the former of these, reserving for future consideration the question, undoubtedly an important one to our argument, of the relation between them.

We have already observed that these epistles are addressed to the angel, Christ's messenger and minister in each church, as the representative head of the local church which is actually personified in him. They are not merely pastoral epistles, although the duties of the pastoral office are nowhere more completely expounded: but this is done indirectly, being the obvious conclusion from the principle assumed in the epistle, which is that the works of the angel and of the church, the state of the angel in the sight of Christ and that of the church, are identical. For this is not merely a convenient device for representing the corporate acts of a church; the unity in the body of Christ is not a fiction but a reality with the most solemn responsibilities underlying it. The identification by Him who is the Truth means that, according to the true organisation of His kingdom, the relations between the bishop and those committed to his charge are such, that the church is responsible for what its ἄγγελος is and does, and he is responsible for that which it is and does. The exceptions to this rule, when, from the want of sufficient time and opportunity, or from some defect in the organic action, the one has not so affected the other that they are brought into harmony, really prove the general principle; and, as I have observed, the language of the epistles is ideal; that is, it is the exponent of the laws of the organic life, not of effects due to obstacles to the action of these laws.

The main elements of that Church life, in which, through the action of all the members of Christ's body according to their several offices and functions, the Church as a whole is truly represented, have been largely illustrated in the history of the apostolic Church even from the days when the Holy Spirit

was first given. In those days we found this life in vigorous action, manifesting itself in earnest adherence to apostolic teaching and by a loving fellowship of saints, on the one hand in the breaking of bread and the prayers,—the spiritual sacrifices of God's sanctuary,—on the other in ministering freely of their worldly goods to the necessities of brethren. The discipline, by which those who lied to the Holy Ghost were cut off from the Church, awakened in the rest a holy consciousness of the sacredness of their calling in Christ; whilst the appointment by apostolic authority of faithful men, full of the Holy Ghost and qualified to labour in the word and doctrine, strengthened and enlarged the Church. The quickening gifts of the Spirit, ordinarily bestowed through prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands, filled the body with energy. We observed also, in examining the life of the first Christians after the day of Pentecost, that two powerful principles were in combination; first, the vitality of every part of the body, secondly, the authority of those to whom the apostolic office was intrusted. The subsequent history of the Church, and the epistles of St Paul, especially the pastoral epistles, have exhibited Church life gradually developing itself under the influence of these two antithetical principles into a more distinctly organic and corporate life, which the seven epistles to the churches now represent in its ideal completeness, as the action of one body in him who is the *persona ecclesiæ*. In this corporate Church life, the concurrence of the whole body is more evidently necessary for some action than for other; yet there is none for which co-operation and reciprocity of action among the members are not required, so that the responsibility, though never ceasing to be personal to him to whom

the charge of the Church is intrusted, is yet always common to all.

The several results of the faithful or the defective exercise of the powers committed to the angel, and of their neglect,—in other words the moral and spiritual state of the several churches,—it would be beside our present purpose to investigate. But there are some points which directly affect our argument, and which we must carefully examine by the aid of those principles which have been determined from the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

1. The angel of the Church in Ephesus is commended "for that," Jesus Christ says, "thou canst not bear evil "men." The word here rendered "bear" (*βαστάσαι*) does not mean to "tolerate" or "endure;" which in one sense is a Christian duty. It implies that evil men were a burden, an incubus, which the Ephesian Church by its angel cast off from itself. This indicates that the commendation refers especially to the exercise of Church discipline, by which they put away from themselves the wicked person, as the Corinthians were directed to do by St Paul. And this, as we have seen, involves the exercise of judgment to distinguish between differing cases; to determine when an offender may be restored in the spirit of meekness; when tares must be left to grow with the wheat until the harvest, and when stumbling-blocks must be removed. And then what amount of separation is expedient both for the offenders and for the Church. In this exercise of judgment, and in the sentence that should follow, we have also found that whilst the ultimate responsibility rests with one, the co-operation of all is required. Indeed, in nothing is the reality of the union between the several members of the Church more strongly illustrated than in regard

to the exercise of discipline. However deeply the pastors and rulers of the Church may be convinced of the value and necessity of discipline, yet, if they would exercise it effectually, it must not be by issuing authoritative judgments from a solitary throne, but through awakening the consciences of Christians by God's truth to a sense of their responsibility in regard to other men's sins. The commendation of Jesus Christ can only be obtained by the united action of the body, to the whole of which, as St Paul reminds the Corinthians, these responsibilities belong.

2. These evil men are, as we gather from the epistles, not only those whose presence in the Church is injurious through the evil example of immoral lives, but also and especially those who by false teaching corrupt the Gospel of Christ. This false doctrine may be what is commonly known as immoral doctrine; that is such as openly allows or even stimulates licentiousness: and such possibly was much of the false teaching of this apostolic age. But to argue that the false doctrine against which Jesus Christ and His apostles warned the Church is merely such as avows its own demoralising tendencies, is to affirm that all the warnings as to the insidious disguises, the "sheep's clothing," in which false prophets conceal themselves and appear as ministers of righteousness, are needless and not to be regarded. False doctrine may indeed be discerned by its fruits: but fruits are sometimes long in ripening; and the standard (given by Christ in His Sermon on the Mount), by which these good and evil fruits may be distinguished, is a far higher standard than that by which man measures morality,—higher than the very letter of the law itself. It would be easy to show, for example, from St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, that

false doctrines may be very moral in their apparent tendency, whilst their true fruits are breaches of the whole spirit of the law of love. The fact of their having a show of righteousness does not make them less false or less pernicious, but on the contrary more dangerous and more really subversive of truth. Indeed all unholiness has its root in falsehood.—The several forms of falsehood, under which all principles antagonistic to the life of the Church may be classified, are very distinctly marked out in these epistles.

(*a.*) The first of these is to be seen in "those who "say that they are apostles and are not," whom the angel of the Ephesian Church had tried and found to be *false*. The falsehood here consists in the claim to be, what they are not, apostles of Christ.

St Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* speaks of those whom he calls sham apostles, ψευδαπόστολοι, deceitful workmen, assuming the character of apostles of Christ. He calls them in bitter irony marvellously great apostles, and in the same spirit tells the Corinthians that if these new-comers had but preached some new Jesus which Paul had not already preached, or bestowed some new gifts of the Spirit, or brought some new Gospel, there might have been some excuse for receiving them; whereas all their supposed superiority consisted in their being fine talkers. His complaint against these men was, not that they taught heretical doctrine, but that they assumed an authority and commission from Christ which were not real, and under false pretences were seducing the minds of the Corinthians, though not avowedly yet in reality, from Jesus Christ Himself. That these pretended apostles, whatever they might at first profess, would soon lead

* 2 Cor. xi. 4, 5, 13.

on their adherents into some anti-Christian doctrine, we may be well assured. The history of the Church contains abundant evidence of that of which St Paul reminds Timotheus, that doctrines which at first are only wanting in sobriety and reverence rapidly grow into something more impious and pernicious; or, as he elsewhere emphatically expresses it, these quack teachers (γόητες) become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. And these warnings, it must be observed, were given by the apostle in reference to this same Church in Ephesus, whose angel is addressed in the Apocalypse. But the radical and original falsehood, both there and here, is the falsehood of pretending a divine commission, whereas the spirit that sent these men was one of vanity and deceit.

The principles here involved touch however a further question which very nearly affects the permanent organisation of the Church. The words used imply a solemn investigation and decision as to these persons who claimed the office and authority of apostles. The commendation of the angel is not simply that he had rejected their claims, but after trial had, after a careful examination, he had *found* that they were not apostles. The latter word is elsewhere used in the New Testament* to express the result of a judicial inquiry; and the language reminds us of the instructions given by St Paul to Timotheus as to the judicial exactness with which charges against those who bear office in the Church should be examined by him, and the publicity which should be given to any sentence upon them, if they are convicted of being offenders.† And if we refer to the address of St Paul to the presbyters of

* Cf. Luke, xxiii. 4, 14, 22; John, xviii. 38; xix. 6; Acts, xxiii. 9.

† Part III. Chap. XIV., p. 501.

this same Ephesian Church at an earlier time,—for this Church which stands first in the Apocalyptic portraiture is also singularly conspicuous in the previous history,—we find fresh light thrown upon the question as to the trial and condemnation of false apostles. We observed in that address,* that the apostle Paul not only warned the presbyters generally against wolves that would not spare the flock, but particularly against perils from within; for out of their own number, of those who had received from the Holy Ghost a spiritual charge in the Church of God, men would arise speaking perverse things in order to draw aside the disciples to be their followers. Office in the Church, St Paul cautioned them, would be abused for the purpose of giving authority to error. To provide against such abuses Timothy was afterwards placed at Ephesus, and the Churches were gradually intrusted to men with apostolic functions. But, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Was not one of the original apostles a traitor to his Lord? The defection of one of the typical Twelve, who were chosen and appointed by Jesus Christ Himself, is a sufficient warning to all generations of the Church that the highest office and the most sacred trust may be betrayed by him to whom they are committed. It is therefore possible,—and provision must be made in the organisation of the Church for such an event,—that those to whom apostolic functions and authority are intrusted may through unfaithfulness forfeit their right to hold and exercise such authority; that they may fall from their apostleship as really as Judas fell from his; so that, though they say they are apostles, they are such no longer. But how shall such cases be tested and determined? Office in the Church, having

* Page 467.

been once committed to a man according to the legitimate order of the kingdom of heaven, is not to be set at nought by the private judgment of individuals, whose authority cannot extend beyond the sphere of their personal responsibilities and spiritual life: but for the Church who shall judge? In the case of Judas the judgment of God itself anticipated all judgment by man, as it did also in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in regard to their Christian standing: but these were but proofs, once for all, that in similar cases judgments legitimately passed by the Church on earth would be confirmed in heaven.

The principles which have been already determined would lead us to the following conclusions. First that, within the sphere of the charge committed to him, each one who is intrusted with all the functions of the apostolate has full authority to test and decide on the claims of every one, prophet or apostle, and pronounce them either true or false. But, that for any judgment to have force beyond this sphere, he must act in union with others, according to the fundamental law of united action originally taught by Christ Himself.* Consequently, as the unity of the Church in the province is represented, not in one person, but in the body corporate of those who hold the same office,—as symbolised by the seven stars in the right hand of the Son of Man,—the sentence, to have universal force, must be a corporate act of this body. In other words, in ecclesiastical language, the bishops of a province are competent to try one of their number, who is accused of being unfaithful to his trust, and, if found by them to have betrayed Christ, he may be by them pronounced to be deprived of his high office

* See Part II. Chap. V., p. 116.

in the Church of God. And since, in the provincial organisation, the bishop of the metropolitical church has a primacy for the purposes of all united action, we must conclude that in this action such primacy would manifest itself.

These conclusions follow necessarily from principles which have been gradually established from the New Testament,—as necessarily as a proposition in Euclid follows from the definitions and axioms. It is sufficient to observe, that the ideal language of the epistles entirely accords with these conclusions. The angel of the Church in Ephesus is commended, we have seen, for trying those that call themselves apostles and are not, and finding them false. It does not therefore follow that he acted alone in matters out of his own sphere of personal responsibility, which was the Church in Ephesus; even within his own sphere, in matters concerning the interests of the local church committed to him, we have found abundant proof that he did not act alone. But as being the first and chief of those who hold the apostolic office under the Son of Man, the first of the seven angels, it belongs to him to take the lead in such united action as is necessary for the trial and condemnation of false apostles; even as Simon Peter was the first and leader of the original Twelve, both on other occasions, and, conspicuously, in that action of the Church after the ascension of Christ, in which the judgment of God on the traitor was declared, and his ἐπισκοπή was pronounced vacant for another to take.

These results agree so remarkably and completely with the canons of the early Church on the subject of discipline, or rather I should say not merely with the canons themselves, but with the principles assumed in them as antecedent to all Church law, that it is neces-

sary to remind the reader, that in the process through which we have arrived at these results not a single argument has been borrowed from post-apostolic usages. I may add, also, not a single interpretation has been given of the various passages of Holy Scripture discussed, which did not seem the most natural and consistent with the context; and, further, not a single principle, of those which we have gradually established, has been accepted except after careful testing and retesting lest we should be deceived by mere semblances of truth. Those who look only to the Apocalyptic representation, without studying the argument from the teaching of Christ and His apostles which has gradually led to the exposition of this ideal language, will of course ridicule the exposition as a fanciful conceit. I leave it, however, without further remark, for the reverent and thoughtful student of Holy Scripture, being assured, with him who first taught men to study nature aright, that Truth is the daughter of Time.

(*b.*) We must turn now to examine the impediments to Church life from another form of falsehood; that is, falsehood in doctrine and practice unconnected with any claims to ecclesiastical office or authority. In two of the epistles we find some opponents of truth who, in the ideal language, are called Nicolaitans; and whose doctrine is described as corresponding, in the Church of Christ, with that by which Balaam enabled Balak to seduce the literal Israel. It must be observed, however, that the authors of the doctrine, not those who hold the doctrine, are called by this name of Nicolaitans. That this epithet is that of a sect which existed in apostolic times, founded by Nicolaus, one of the Seven, certainly

does not seem to be sufficiently proved by the existence of an obscure sect of Antinomian Gnostics with that name at the beginning of the third century, or by the legends about Nicolaus and his wife, which, as is usual with such stories, improve in telling as time goes on. At all events, I cannot conceive that any one who has a true conception either of the character of this book as the Revelation of Jesus Christ, or of its method of teaching, will be satisfied with this kind of explanation. It is far more consistent with the purpose and general style of the Apocalypse to suppose, that the designation is a general term for the authors of false doctrine by which they seduce and overcome the Lord's people;* and that thus it is a Grecising of the name of Balaam, which, according to the best etymology, signifies the "destroyer of the people."† At all events the question, in the interpretation of the epistles, is not as to any sect or αἵρεσις, but as to doctrine, and works proceeding from the doctrine. What the false doctrine was, and how it represents all anti-Christian doctrine, we shall consider presently. But it will be well first to refer to previous apostolic writings in order to gain a general view of the question before us. The apostolic epistles supply abundant evidence of the fact that the conflict with false doctrines, which at first were those of Judaising corrupters of Christianity, very soon passed into another phase. We find that the various elements of the errors which, in post-apostolic times, assumed definite shapes under the general name of Gnosticism, were actively at work in the lifetime of the apostles, the

* Compare with νικολαΐται (οἱ νικῶντες τὸν λαόν) the promise at the close of each epistle to him that overcometh (τῷ νικῶντι). The whole scene is that of a conflict, of defeat and victory.

† See Archbishop Trench on the Seven Epistles, p. 82.

root falsehood being, as St Paul intimates * and St John expressly affirms, the denial, either explicit or by implication, of the fundamental truth of the incarnation. This radical falsehood issued in various forms of error, such as the interposition of subordinate mediators between God and man,—"worshipping of angels,"—and sometimes produced a pseudo-asceticism, whilst at other times, and (it seems) more generally at first, the superior γνῶσις was asserted in doctrines more attractive to the multitude, which taught that no acts of this vile body can defile the spirit which is purified by knowledge. From the epistles both of St Peter and of St Jude we gather that men holding these principles were to be found at times uniting with Christians in religious fellowship, so as to be rocks on which some made shipwreck through associating with them in the ἀγαπαί or love-feasts. But St Jude also describes them as separatists from the Church—οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες,—as being their own pastors—ἑαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες,—and as speaking evil of authority, and, like Korah, resisting and despising the ordinance of God (τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ τοῦ Κορὲ ἀπώλοντο). St John also speaks of such men as having "gone out from us," having left the communion of the Church, and thus proving that they never were in spirit true members of the body. The explanation of the several accounts evidently is, that whilst those who held these anti-Christian principles would willingly have remained in fellowship with the Church, if they had been allowed, yet when they were opposed by the apostles and those in authority, they separated themselves and formed αἱρέσεις, sects of their own, though there is reason to believe that these sects did not become organised communities until the post-apostolic

* Col. ii. 8, &c.

age. On the other hand, if, through negligence or tendency to false doctrine on the part of the pastors of the Church, these false teachers continued in its communion, they exercised a pernicious and fatal influence, and were stumbling-blocks to many.

This explanation also completely satisfies the Apocalyptic language. The angel of the Church in Ephesus, by his abhorrence of the abominable deeds of the Nicolaitans, was free from all complicity with their false and unholy principles. The angel of the Church in Pergamum, although a bold and determined witness for the faith when it was openly assailed, yet had not sufficient spiritual discernment to distinguish the danger and impiety of this false doctrine, and allowed those who held it to remain in communion with the church in that city, so that he and the church with him became, through their want of zeal against falsehood, partakers in the sin. The case of Thyatira, where the anti-Christian teaching was the same, falls under a different head because of falsehood appearing there in a more developed form.

These general conclusions might be sufficient for the purposes of our argument, whatever were the doctrines and works so emphatically condemned; for we must infer from the teaching of the apostles that the false doctrine must be that which directly or indirectly contradicts the faith on which the Church is founded. But, unfortunately, the true force of the warnings in the epistles is often obscured by the assumption, that the principles condemned were merely those of gross licentiousness; and it will be necessary therefore to examine very carefully into this question. Certainly we should hardly suppose that a new revelation of Jesus Christ was necessary to warn the Church against licentious-

ness, in the ordinary sense of the word; besides which, eating things sacrificed to idols, which in itself, St Paul teaches, was a matter wholly indifferent, cannot be classed with acts of immorality except on some deeper principle than any which appears on the surface.

I have already observed that there is no need for us to rely on uncertain traditions as to the derivation of Nicolaitans from Nicolaus, the proselyte of Antioch, in order to explain the warnings of the Apocalypse. Yet it is at all events instructive to notice, that Clement of Alexandria, writing at the beginning of the third century of the Nicolaitan Gnostics of his time, says that they misunderstood a recorded saying of Nicolaus, "that we ought to abuse the flesh," * which he meant in an ascetic sense, but which they interpreted as teaching that the flesh was so inferior and contemptible, that it might pass through all pollution without in the least defiling the spirit. Of what value is this vile body that we should concern ourselves with its actions? Clement refers in illustration of this Gnostic principle to the saying of Aristippus, the Cyrenaic philosopher, when reproached for his unchastity; Ἔχω γάρ, ἔλεγεν, Λαΐδα καὶ οὐκ ἔχομαι ὑπ' αὐτῆς. Whatever historical value we may attach to the account of Nicolaus given by Clement, it may at least suggest the important truth, that false asceticism and libertinism have a common origin in the same primal falsehood, namely, that the body of man is a thing to be abused, not to be used for God's glory as redeemed and sanctified in Christ.

However it is quite unnecessary for us to travel beyond Scripture itself for the solution of the question; and I have only referred to the preceding exposition of one phase of Gnostic doctrine to show that, on any

* Clem. Alex. Strom. IV., p. 411, c. Paris, 1629.

theory as to the Nicolaitans, it is not enough to tell us that they were a sect who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. But a comparison of the Apocalyptic language with the teaching of the apostles will expound to us completely and, I will venture to say, conclusively, both what are the works and doctrine of which the Son of Man declares His abhorrence, and further what is the root falsehood, the πρῶτον ψεῦδος, from which all proceed.

In the epistle to the Church in Pergamum, as I have before observed, a parallel is drawn sufficient to direct us in the interpretation. "Thou hast there (*i.e.*, in "Pergamum) men holding the teaching of Balaam, who "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the sons "of Israel, to eat things offered to idols, and to com- "mit fornication. Thus hast also thou men holding "the teaching of the Nicolaitans." The teaching of the Nicolaitans then is to the Church what the teaching of Balaam was to Israel. We find the same parallel, both in the Second Epistle of St Peter and in St Jude's Epistle, between Balaam and the false teachers of those days. He is the type of the seducers of God's people in all ages, in this especially, as noticed by these two apostles, that some worldly advantage or other,—gain, reputation, power, pleasure,—is originally the stimulating motive in all departures from truth. And (St Peter says) "they promise *liberty*, being themselves all the "while slaves of corruption; for by whatsoever any man "is overcome, to that is he also made a slave." The Gnostic theory of "abusing the flesh" is, it will be observed, fully anticipated and answered by the apostle, and with special reference to the false teachers who walk in the way of Balaam. The general parallel then amounts to this, that as Balaam, having failed in all

attempts to gain the reward of unrighteousness by open opposition to Israel, succeeded in seducing the people of the Lord through counsel which he gave to the king of Moab,—namely, that they should be tempted to join in idolatrous feasts by means of the Midianitish women,—so these false teachers turned aside Christians from their allegiance to Christ, not through open opposition to the faith, but by subtle and seductive doctrines. And those who hold the doctrine of Balaam in the Church of Christ answer to those among the Israelites who held that the practices into which they were drawn,—the uniting with others in their heathenish feasts, and the alliances with heathenish women, called fornication because there could be no true marriage according to the law in such cases,—were matters of indifference, in which they might act according to their wishes without forfeiting their standing as Israelites. The history indeed shows that those who offended did not leave their own people, but brought to their brethren their Midianitish wives, in the presence of Moses and all the people, as though they were unconscious of any offence against the law of God.

The works that were the result of these false principles were, in the case of Israel, "eating things sacri-" ficed to idols and fornication." We might suppose that these acts, one of which is certainly not in itself immoral, though forbidden by the Mosaical law,—while the other is taken in the Old Testament as the figure for all breaches of covenant with God,—were no more than the representatives of corresponding spiritual pollutions under the new dispensation; and certainly to assume, as many commentators do, that these were literally the works of the Nicolaitans, without any attempt to distinguish between sins against the

Mosaical law, and sins against Christ, argues little insight into the question at issue. At the same time, we must observe that in the following epistle,—to Thyatira,—the same two acts are again taken as representing the results of anti-Christian teaching in another form, even though the Old Testament Jezebel, who there typifies this phase of anti-Christianity, did not seduce by εἰδωλόθυτα, but with the strong hand of power established the worship of Baal. The two acts therefore are evidently not selected merely because they occur in the history of Balaam, but because of their appropriateness and significance. And, when we turn to the apostolic history and teaching, we are met by the remarkable fact that these two acts are marked with a special note of condemnation; and we find also, what is of much more importance, a complete exposition of the principles on which they were justified by some calling themselves Christians, and of those on which they were condemned by the apostolic Church. It will be remembered that in the Council at Jerusalem,* whilst Gentiles were declared free from all obligations to the Mosaical law, yet three things were declared to be forbidden to all Christians by the principles of the Gospel itself: (1.) Eating things offered to idols; (2.) Fornication; (3.) Eating of blood. All these, we then observed, were forbidden to Gentile Christians by the law of Christian charity; and the first also on religious grounds, the second on moral, the third on the ground of reverence towards a divine ordinance. As that divine ordinance passed away with the whole of the old economy, the reasons for the last prohibition gradually lost their force, until after the destruction of Jerusalem they existed no longer. But the reasons for

* Cf. Part III. Chap. IX.

the first two prohibitions still remained. And St Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, not only explains the necessity of the two prohibitions,—though he places them on different grounds,—but he so completely expounds the relation of these acts to anti-Christian falsehood, and of the true conduct of the Christians in such matters to the one fundamental faith, that nothing whatever is left to mere conjecture. We find that, in each case, the principles on which these acts were defended were those of a false γνῶσις. "As concern-" ing things offered to idols we all have knowledge;" we all know that an idol is really nothing; that there is not the slightest difference between meats offered to idols and any other; that to suppose any meats to be in themselves either beneficial or injurious spiritually is mere superstition,—for it is that which cometh out of the heart and not that which entereth into the mouth that affects a man's spiritual state; and therefore (they argued) we may join in the idolatrous feasts or even sit at meat in the idol's temple. What can it signify to one who has knowledge? Others carried the argument a step further. As we are not made better or worse by the disuse or use of meats, so also all the acts of this vile body are matters of indifference: one that has knowledge cannot be defiled by anything that belongs to the lower sphere. It is the Cyrenaic excuse for Corinthian pleasures reappearing in the Christian Church at Corinth, and anticipating the arguments of Gnosticism. But, as I have already observed, the radical falsehood which underlies all such arguments, and which in all ages has given birth to errors and delusions without number,—some of them in a totally opposite direction and with great show of sanctity,—is this; that there is no real union

between spiritual and material things; that the two worlds are quite distinct; that we may live in the one sphere without being affected by the other; that man's body is not really united with God; in other words, that the Son of God has not really come in the flesh. St Paul therefore meets the fallacious pleas of pseudo-gnosis, in both these cases, by arguments drawn from the same source, and depending on the same central truth, the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In reference to the one act, eating things sacrificed to idols,—whilst he allows fully that in themselves meats are indifferent, and therefore if a Christian be invited to a feast, he should ask no questions for conscience sake, as if he had any superstitious scruples in the matter,—yet he reminds the Corinthians that, as the bread which we break, and the cup which we bless, are to us who receive them as such the communion with the body and blood of Christ, so eating of things sacrificed to idols, and drinking the cup of devils, whenever these bodily acts identify us, even in the minds of others, with the service of devils, are a sin against Him whose members we are. On the other hand, against all misuse of the sexual relations this argument is yet stronger and more universal, as it is not a question of the feelings of others only but of our own personal life. The body of the Christian is not a vile thing to be abused, but the temple of the Holy Ghost and the very member of Christ; every union therefore, except in holy marriage, is a profane desecration of the body of Jesus Christ.

We perceive therefore, without difficulty, why these two acts are taken in the ideal language of the Apocalypse as the representatives of all fruits of anti-Christian falsehood, because, in the spheres of religion and morality respectively, they deny that the body of man

is holy through the incarnation and redemption of Christ. But other acts may proceed from the self-same principle, and therefore may be justly represented by these specimens of the fruits of falsehood, although in outward form they are totally different. It may seem strange, but it is nevertheless certain, that fornication, and forbidding to marry; eating the pollutions of idols, and commanding to abstain from meats; are results of the same root falsehood, children of the same hateful parent; the one family begotten of the lust of the flesh, the other of the pride of the spirit, and the common father of all being the lie, that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh. Nor let any imagine that the sins of the spirit are a whit less hateful to Christ, or less fatal to the Church, than sins of the flesh. Those which, as St Paul reminds Timothy, are expressly foretold by the Spirit as marks of apostasy, doctrines of devils, originating in falsehood and hypocrisy and a seared conscience, (and this language is surely as strong as any used in the Apocalypse of the works and doctrine of the Nicolaitans) were prohibitions which might seem to indicate a complete victory of the spirit over all fleshly appetites. Indeed, must we not carry the argument yet farther, and admit that a principle often avowed by Christians in the present day, as in all preceding ages,—I mean that outward forms and bodily acts are of no consequence in religion if the heart is right,—is a result of the same pseudo-gnosis, and, implicitly, a denial of the Incarnation? Assuredly every religious system which is based on this as a fundamental principle can be no part of the Church of Christ.

Thus, as was anticipated, the arguments of St Paul direct us to the solution of the whole question as to

the falsehood in doctrine and practice with which the Church has to contend. But it will be necessary, before we leave this branch of the subject, to consider it in relation to the kindred question of discipline. It is evident that the question here is not merely as to teachers, but as to those who hold the doctrine, whom the angel of the Church in Pergamum is condemned for having in his communion; which implies certainly that his duty was to have rejected and put them away as evil men. But this does not imply that discipline ought to be exercised on those who are not teachers, and do not assume the office of teaching, for opinions only. Because those who held the doctrine of Nicolaitans could only be made manifest by their overt acts, that is by the works of the Nicolaitans, to which the first epistle in the series refers. It is not the office of the Church to pluck up the tares, that is, those who are themselves injured by evil principles, even though their characters are the actual outgrowth of the falsehood (διαβόλου βοτανή), unless by being teachers of evil or by positive sins they injure the body of Christ and are a leaven leavening the mass. It is here that the authority of the Church comes in, as qualified to decide what acts are of such a nature as to give manifest proof of evil. Thus the Council at Jerusalem decreed certain prohibitions to be necessary for the Gentile converts. And St Paul writing to the Corinthians proves to them that those who ate things offered to idols, as such, were really idolaters, and both with idolaters and fornicators Christians ought not even to eat. But it does not therefore follow, because it is the office of the Church thus to protect itself, and stamp anti-Christian acts with the mark of reprobation, that therefore it has power to make rules for the guidance of the

conscience in these matters, and to make the abuse of Christian liberty the cloak for bringing men under bondage. The decree of the Council at Jerusalem was, notwithstanding these exceptions, an assertion of the liberty of the Christian; "It seemed good to the Holy "Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden "than these necessary things." And there is an expression in the epistle to Thyatira, which we must regard as a confirmation by the Son of Man of the principle of liberty asserted by His Church on earth. Having condemned the angel of the Church for allowing those things which the apostles and presbyters at Jerusalem declared it necessary to prohibit, He adds, speaking to those in Thyatira who were not misled by this pseudognosis, "I lay on you no other burden; "only that which ye have, hold fast until I come."

(*c.*) But there is another form which falsehood assumes, namely that of an organised society separate from and opposed to the Church of Christ. This type of evil is recognised in two of the epistles. To the angel of the Church in Smyrna the Son of Man says; "I know the "blasphemy (which proceeds) from those who say that "they are Jews, and they are not but (are) the syna-"gogue of Satan." And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia; "Behold, I give (thee) from the syna-"gogue of Satan, of those who say that they are Jews, "—and they are not but do lie." That in these cities of Asia there were synagogues of Jews, who were blasphemers of Christ and His Church, and some of whom may have been converted to the faith, we need not doubt; but that we must look further for the complete explanation of the Apocalyptic language is certain. Indeed the reasons given by commentators for understanding it literally of Jews, such as that Jews

and not heretics persecuted, and that the term συναγωγή is abandoned to Jews, are singularly frivolous. For it is not said of these men that they persecuted but that they blasphemed; and as regards the latter objection, even if it were true, yet as these men are mystically Jews, their community would be in the symbolical language a synagogue.* That heretical sects might be and actually were called by Christians "the synagogue of Satan," will not be questioned. And it is a far more serious objection to the literal interpretation, that it requires the term Jews to be understood in different senses in the same sentence, and that these men are "liars," claiming to be what they were not. In fact we seem to be driven by logical necessity to interpret the term here, as St Paul does, of those who worship God spiritually and are really His people. Who they might have been that form the subject in the proposition, we know not and need not inquire; all that concerns us is that which is predicated of them, namely that they claimed to be the people of the Lord, and were not, but lied in making such a claim and were the synagogue of Satan. That is, the language represents falsehood in the form of a community, calling itself Christian, and yet anti-Christian in its whole constitution.

This form of falsehood is indeed the natural and necessary consequence of error in doctrine. For if those who teach and hold anti-Christian doctrine are condemned by the Church, the αἵρεσις, instead of being a sect within the Church, as that of the Pharisees was

* If the instance in James, ii. 2, were not sufficient, the words of Ignatius in his epistle to Polycarp, *Bishop of Smyrna*, πυκνότερον συναγωγαὶ γινέσθωσαν (c. iv.) would prove that the word was not yet disused among Christians. See Suicer on the word.

among the Jews, becomes a separate society without it, with its false prophets if not its false apostles, its leaders and representative men, around whom it organises itself more or less in the semblance of the Church of Jesus Christ. It thus forms itself into what we may call an anti-Ecclesia, a false church which is the contradictory opposite of the Church, as Antichrist is of Christ. I have already observed that there is no evidence, either in the history or writings of the apostles, that during their lifetime such communities were formed; and from the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, and of Hegesippus as quoted by Eusebius,* it appears to have been the belief of Christians, that not until the death of the original Twelve were "the com-"binations of impious error" openly manifested. It was not, according to ecclesiastical historians, till the commencement of the second century that "they assumed for themselves a regular determinate form, under certain acknowledged leaders, and subject to a system of laws peculiarly their own." But that such anti-Christian societies, founded either on the express denial of the incarnation, or on doctrines that implied the denial, were a source of trial to the Church and of peril to Christians, all must acknowledge. And the very parallel which is implied in the Apocalyptic language was used by Christian writers.† Thus when Trypho the Jew objects that there were many who were called Christians, who ate things sacrificed to idols, and blasphemed the God of the Old Testament, and denied the resurrection, Justin reminds him that there were many sects who called themselves Jews,

* Clem. Alex. Strom., vii. p. 764 (Paris, 1629); Euseb. Eccles. His., iii. 32; iv. 7.

† See for example Justin Dial. cum Tryphone, c. xxxv. and lxxx.

whom Trypho would not acknowledge to be really Jews.

We cannot of course infer from this language of the Apocalypse that every sect external to the Church is a "synagogue of Satan:" for those who are here so designated are such as have no claim to the name of Christian, which we are not justified in withholding from any who are baptised into the one faith, and do not deny this faith. But it is important to notice the force of the word *συναγωγή* as distinguished from *ἐκκλησία*. Although the former word is used occasionally of the assemblies of Christians, and its cognate form of *σύναξις* became the ecclesiastical term for such assemblies and specially for the Eucharistic communion,—the verb from which it is derived embodying the fundamental idea of Christian communion,*—yet *συναγωγή* is unsuitable to represent the Church of Christ as a society, because it does not include the idea, contained in *ἐκκλησία*, of a superior authority calling and constituting the society. The difference between the words is the difference between a voluntary society and one which is a divine institution. The whole history of the Church, from its first foundation to its complete development in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, has proved that its organic life was not the result of man's will or choice, although the enlightened reason of man has its free play in the development: it is therefore not an *αἵρεσις*, nor is it merely a *συναγωγή*; it is also an *ἐκκλησία*. On the other hand, a society that is merely voluntary cannot be an *ἐκκλησία*; in its origin it is an *αἵρεσις*, in its constitution a *συναγωγή*.

(*d.*) In the preceding case, the Church has kept itself

* Matt. xviii. 20.

free from the pollutions of Antichrist, and suffers only through his assaults from without. But the fourth and last form in which falsehood can exhibit itself is one far more fatal to the life of the Church, a form indeed which we should hardly conceive to be possible, were it not for the express warnings of Holy Scripture. We have already found that it is possible that doctrine, virtually and by implication denying the primary truth on which the Church is founded, may grow up in the very bosom of the Church, and be harboured there in ignorance of its true character. From connivance with acts which are the result of falsehood, the transition is easy to the allowance, and then to the actual recognition, of the teaching itself. In fact, this is only an exaggerated form of the presence of evil in the communion of the Church. But it does seem impossible, that this should be anything more than a superficial derangement of the body politic, or that any real and intimate alliance could be formed between the Church of Christ and a system of anti-Christian falsehood. Indeed if anti-Christian error were only such as directly and expressly denies the foundation, such as refuses to confess the one faith on which the Church is built, then it would be in the nature of things impossible, because the Church is the communion of those who confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But the whole tenor of the apostolic teaching warns us that there may be a denial of the faith where there is no open contradiction; that Satan may be disguised as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. And this alone can explain the extraordinary scene depicted to us, by this Revelation of Jesus Christ, in one of the seven representative churches. The angel of the Church in Thyatira is highly commended for his love,

and service, and his patience, and his last works as more abundant than his first. "But," the divine voice continues, "I have against thee, that thou permittest* "thy wife Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; "and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit "fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols."†

I have assumed, for reasons given in the note, that this remarkable passage indicates a strange and unnatural relation between Jezebel and the Church as represented and personified in its angel. Not indeed that the difficulty is removed by the rendering in the English Bible, which still represents the Church as sanctioning perilous anti-Christian errors, and allowing them to be taught under the pretensions of a divine commission and of spiritual gifts. But when the prophetess is marked out as "thy wife Jezebel" the warning becomes far more definite and instructive.

What may have been the actual facts in Thyatira itself, here disguised under a thin veil of symbolical language, it is unnecessary to inquire. The history of heresy, both ancient and modern, contains many singular extravagancies; and Montanus and his prophetesses, through whom he deceived many churches and servants of Christ,—among them the famous Tertullian,—possibly had a parallel in Thyatira. But the words,

* It must be observed that ἀφεῖς not ἐᾷς is the true reading. The latter would be simply, let alone: the former implies more positive sanction.

† I have adopted the rendering, "Thy wife Jezebel," not only because there is sufficient if not preponderating evidence for the reading, and because it is incredible that such a reading would have been introduced,—describing Jezebel as the wife of the angel,—whilst there would be the strongest reasons for erasing the word: but also because τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζαβέλ is a meaningless phrase, unless it means the wife of the person who is the subject of the verb. There is no reason for laying such stress on the *sex* of Jezebel; but abundant reason for marking her *relation* to the angel of the Church.

"thy wife Jezebel," carry us at once into the region of symbols, and remind us that we must look below the external facts to the underlying principles, so that the lesson may be applicable to all ages. Jezebel the heathenish wife of the king of Israel, introducing the worship of Baal among the people of the Lord, and stirring up her weak husband to do evil in Israel, is obviously the type of usurped authority in the Church used for anti-Christian purposes. And as the true Church is the spouse of Christ, so this Jezebel would represent in ideal language a pseudo-Church,—as the great whore, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, undoubtedly does in Apocalyptic language, whatever that pseudo-Church may be. This Jezebel also, who claims prophetic powers and teaches as if by the spirit of prophecy the anti-Christian doctrines of the Nicolaitans, is represented as committing adultery and having children of her fornications, on whom God's judgments shall fall, and convince all the churches that, notwithstanding all spurious sanctity and claims to spiritual gifts, the Son of Man, the divine Governor of the Church, "searcheth the hearts "and reins." The description is evidently that of an anti-Christian body teaching authoritatively doctrines which by implication deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, whilst she, in whom this mystery of iniquity is personified, is united with him in whom the personality of the Church is represented, even as the heathen Jezebel was united to the king of Israel.

It would be out of place in this work to inquire whether, and in what manner, this monstrous form of evil and falsehood, which at first would seem in the nature of things an impossibility, has been actually fulfilled in the history of the Christian Church. It is

evident, however, that if, as we have been led to conclude, these seven churches are representations of the Church Catholic, we must suppose that the state of the Church here described was not merely a theoretical possibility, but was before the mind of Him, who in this book revealed to His servants the things that were coming, as a real and most portentous danger. Let us then, as if we knew nothing of the subsequent history of the Church, endeavour, by a comparison of St Paul's teaching with this Apocalyptic portraiture, to ascertain what would be the lineaments of this monstrous form of falsehood. In the Epistle to the Colossians,—Colossæ, be it observed, was in this same province of Asia so prolific of all forms of religious life,—the apostle warns Christians against certain philosophical perversions of the Gospel, "after the elements of the world, and not "after Christ," all which he traces to not holding the head, Jesus Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness "of the Godhead bodily," and of whose fulness we receive in His Church. These perversions consisted on the one hand in a *cultus* of angels, under the plea of humility, as if the one Intercessor and Mediator between God and man were not sufficient, and men needed some subordinate intercessors; a doctrine (the apostle says) in which the imagination and vain speculations as to the supernatural world are substituted for faith, and feelings are excited which, however religious and devout and self-abasing they may seem, are really unspiritual and carnal. Again, from the same unbelief in the perfection of Christ and in our completeness in Him, proceed dogmatical rules as to the use of outward things,—"Touch not, taste not, handle not,"—as if the law of ordinances were not entirely fulfilled and disannulled in the cross of Christ; such rules

having a show of spiritual wisdom in the superior sanctity and self-abasement and neglect of the body (instead of respect to it), which they promote; but really being nothing more than a gratifying of the carnal mind,—just as truly so as the opposite errors in the direction of licentiousness. Again, in the First Epistle to Timotheus (Asia is still the scene to which the warnings refer), St Paul recurs to the same subject, and warns his spiritual son that the Spirit expressly foretold that there would be an apostasy from the faith through false doctrine, a mystery of iniquity contradicting the mystery of godliness, which is the manifestation of Jesus Christ in the flesh. And among these subtle and most fatal deceits, he mentions specially rules as to celibacy and abstaining from meats. It is not, of course, celibacy in itself, or fasting in itself, that the apostle condemns as anti-Christian. The former of these he elsewhere declares to be honourable and often expedient, if a man has the gift of continency. The latter is necessary to bring under the body and keep it in subjection, and is taught by Christ Himself. But when laws and prohibitions are made to bring the conscience under bondage in such matters, and a standard of spurious sanctity is thus set up, "doctrines and com- "mandments of men" instead of the Gospel of God, then Christ's perfection and ours in Him are denied. And these doctrines being, nevertheless, veiled under the appearance of a very holy and mortified life, are in the highest degree calculated to deceive and seduce the servants of Christ, who would turn with abhorrence from all that directly fostered profaneness and licentious indulgence. Indeed, so subtle is the falsehood, so easily confounded with the truth, so difficult, or rather impossible, is it to distinguish completely, and draw the

exact line, between such holiness and victory over the fleshly appetites as are necessary for the Christian, and such as proceed from anti-Christian principles,—for it is the spirit and not the mere outward act that alone distinguishes them,—that we may well understand the warning, emphatically given and reiterated by the apostle Paul, that these would form of all the most perilous temptations to the Church. We are, therefore, constrained, in interpreting the Apocalyptic language so as to be applicable generally, to look in this particular direction for any errors which could enter at all deeply into Church life. But we must observe, that the mere prevalence of such errors amongst Christians would not satisfy the ideal representation in the epistle to Thyatira, even with the rendering of the English version. We must consider further how it is possible for a fellowship, really anti-Christian, to be formed actually within the communion of the Church of Christ. This is at all events represented in the epistle, as Jezebel with her adherents and children, and those that commit adultery with her, do undoubtedly all together represent some kind of unholy fellowship, and they are more or less sanctioned by the Church officially, and certainly are not cast out of its communion. This anti-Christian fellowship then, being in the Church, must confess the one faith; but its own peculiar creed, that is the anti-Christian doctrine, is something superadded. Even as the αἵρεσις of the Pharisees, whilst professing the common faith of Judaism in Moses and the prophets, were not Pharisees because of that common faith, but because of the peculiar tenets of the sect, which were therefore its bond of fellowship,—so must it be in the Church. Even if all the Jews should have become Pharisees, still the Jewish nation and the

sect of the Pharisees would be two different fellowships. In the Christian Church, the αἵρεσις symbolised as Jezebel might so extend in any particular Church as practically to be conterminous; still the fellowship based on the one faith, and the fellowship based on some doctrine which by implication denies that faith, must not only not be confounded in our mind, but, however they may seem to meet in the same persons, they are really as contrary one to another as light and darkness. And now we are able to proceed a step further, to which both the actual history of Jezebel, and the words "thy wife Jezebel," distinctly point. For these indicate not only that the anti-Christian fellowship has spread its noxious influence through the Church, but that its organisation is intimately allied with the organisation of the Church. It is true that such a relation seems, at first, in the highest degree improbable; but it is not more so than that anti-Christian doctrine should be at all countenanced in the Church, which the Epistles to the Churches plainly describe, and which we have seen is not only possible but a certain danger, when those doctrines are clothed in the garb of superior sanctity. And St Paul, we must remember, not only contemplates the possibility of a very close relation between an anti-Christian system and the Church, but expressly predicts it. In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he foretells that, before the final coming of Christ in judgment, a strange mystery would be revealed. The man of sin, the son of perdition,—a title given by Christ to an apostate apostle,—the impersonation of anti-Christian doctrine and practice, would seat himself in the temple of God, and there would assert a supereminent and indeed divine authority. And the temple of God can be nothing else than the

Church of Christ; a temple erected by Jews at Jerusalem would be no temple of God but a house of Satan. We must imagine therefore, it seems, a power with these impious claims,—claiming, for example, an infallible authority in the Church,—actually enthroned in the organisation of the Church, so that bishops of Christ's Church, instead of acknowledging Him alone as the Head of the body, are deceived into recognising this Power as their one centre of unity, on whose throne also must depend, in order to fulfil the description, the false doctrines incorporated into a system, and taught by pseudo-divine authority: these false doctrines being really a denial of Christ, although we must suppose further, that the one faith is still professed and taught, and doubtless by many humble and simple souls held spiritually. For otherwise the body possessed by this anti-Christian power would not be the temple of God and the Church of Jesus Christ, which both the words of St Paul and the Apocalyptic description necessarily require. Whether the form of falsehood thus portrayed has already appeared in the Christian Church in its most matured type, it does not fall within the limits of this argument to inquire. Our only concern is with the meaning of the Apocalyptic language.

We have thus determined, by a careful analysis, the four distinct forms, distinct though nearly related, under which falsehood would present itself and have to be overcome. They exhibit altogether a complete kingdom of evil contrasting with, and antagonistic to, the kingdom of heaven. There are false apostles instead of apostles of Christ; a mystery of iniquity in doctrine and works, opposed to the mystery of godliness; there is the synagogue of Satan, external to the Church of Christ and in open opposition to it; and, lastly, strangest

mystery of all, the fellowship of Antichrist within the communion of the Church, and in unnatural alliance with it. But there is one very remarkable fact which we must not overlook, and which is a singular proof of the power of the Spirit and truth of Christ: I mean that even those evils which are most serious, and which we might have supposed to be absolutely fatal, are represented as affecting very little the vitality of the Church life, much less as being able to destroy the Church. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Although in the Church in Pergamum there were those who held the abominable doctrine of the Nicolaitans, yet that Church receives a higher commendation than any other for holding fast the name and faith of Christ in a time of trial. Not even the intimate relation of the Church in Thyatira with an anti-Christian system can prevent it from being earnest in love and fruitful in good works; and whilst the Ephesian Church, which hated the works of the Nicolaitans, had declined in love, this Church, where Satan seemed to have gained the victory, had increased in zeal and active service. On the other hand, in Sardis where the life of the Church was almost extinct, and in Laodicea the state of which was most offensive to Christ, we hear neither of doctrines of the Nicolaitans nor of the arts of Jezebel. Whilst therefore it is impossible to exaggerate the evil of anti-Christian doctrine and of an anti-Christian polity, however these may be disguised under a cloak of religion and sanctity, yet it is well to remember that there is an extraordinary power and divine virtue in the faith on which the Church is founded, which cannot be brought into contact, even with the mystery of iniquity itself, without proving its own superiority and neutralising much of the pernicious tendency of evil.

The strongest abhorrence of that which is anti-Christian must not lead us to forget, that the Church of Thyatira was one of the seven candlesticks to which the Son of Man ministered, and the angel of that Church a star in His right hand.

IV.—Relation of Church Life and the Personal Life.

The epistles to the seven Churches, combined with the vision of the Son of Man walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, are, we have seen, a complete synopsis and miniature representation of all Church life. Of Church life, I say, and not of the spiritual life of individual Christians: for this Revelation of Jesus Christ is conclusive against the theory that makes the Church the mere aggregate of those who believe on Christ, that counts the personal spiritual life as everything in the kingdom of heaven, and the corporate life as of little consequence. Yet, although the subject of the epistles is the corporate life of the Church, in no part of the New Testament, not even in the epistles of St Paul, is life through personal faith more distinctly recognised as that which cannot be absorbed into the corporate life, and for which Church life is no substitute: nowhere are we more completely taught, that, whilst in the organisation of the Church as a human society the unit is the local Church, man's relation to Christ and his responsibilities can never be other than personal.

Indeed we have found that this fundamental law of personal responsibility in all duties undertaken for Christ, in other words of the supremacy of the personal conscience in man, itself determines the true form which the organisation of the Church must assume. And the

Apocalyptic language in these epistles, exhibiting Church life in the person of the angel, most emphatically asserts the truth of the corporate life needing the personal spiritual life as its sustaining power, being indeed nothing else than that life in action and combination. The fact that the corporate life of a Church is so linked to the spiritual life of a person, that they flourish or decay together, is a proof of the necessity and value of the personal life of faith such as we cannot elsewhere find. There is no Christian who does not recognise this truth in regard to the lower functions of the pastoral office. No cure of souls can be exercised aright except by one who has personal faith in Christ, and in this ministry the spiritual life of the minister is sure to be reflected in his charge; and the immense value of a relation of this nature, when rightly used, in educing and cultivating spiritual life in every member, is acknowledged by all Christians. The prominence given to the personal spiritual life in one emphasises it in every other person with whom he stands in this relation. No reader of St Paul's epistles indeed is ignorant how powerful an element in his ministry was his own personal spiritual life, and even the distinctive peculiarities of his personal history. In him who laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, the personal element is most distinct; even as in Peter, the chief and representative of the original Twelve, all the elements of personal character are far more conspicuous than in any other of the apostles. And the instance of St Paul proves, not indeed that apostolic functions should have now the same extended sphere of action as his, but that as far as apostolic functions can extend, so as to be really spiritual,—that is, so as to deal with the consciences of men,—they cannot cease to be personal without a

loss to real spiritual life throughout the body. And the very purpose of the true constitution of the Church is to develop to the utmost both personal and corporate life among Christians, to give to both free play, and thus harmonise those two powerful elements, which we found co-existing from the first in the Church of Christ, the spontaneousness and freedom of spiritual life, and the force of authority.

This conclusion as to the value of personal administration,—that is, of Episcopacy in the true sense of the word,—to the development of personal spiritual life in the Church, is, I am of course aware, questioned by many. They imagine that experience proves it to have a directly contrary effect; that it tends to exaggerate Church life at the expense of the personal life, and is even hostile to the free action of that life. But we may be assured that wherever such results may appear they are due to other causes, and to some departure from the true constitution of the Church, and not to the constitution itself. Whatever has increased the distance between the chief pastor and the flock committed to his charge, so that his personal life is not in contact with theirs; whatever makes him the mere minister of a system, an important functionary to act according to fixed laws of government and not an apostle and pastor to his people;—is a departure from the personal principle on which the true organisation of the kingdom of heaven is founded, and is therefore injurious to personal spiritual life in the Church. It is the immediate personal relations of the angel, to the Son of Man on the one hand, and to the Church intrusted to him on the other, that alone can satisfy the principle. But, perhaps, the objection which weighs most, though often unconsciously, in the minds of many religious persons

against such an episcopacy as shall really represent now the apostolic office, is that it makes so much to depend on the spiritual life of one. If we could insure bishops being always men full of the Holy Ghost, with real spiritual discernment, undoubtedly they would exercise a very large influence for good; but considering what men commonly are, they think that it is better that we should not risk, so to speak, so much in one person. And this is the substance of the answer by which they satisfy their own judgments at least, when the examples of the apostles and apostolic men are urged as proving how much larger was their ἐπισκοπή than that of an ordinary presbyter. If we could have Pauls and Timothys and Tituses now, it would be very well to have real bishops. But, as it is, some kind of Congregationalism or Presbyterianism, even if the shadow of the superior office be retained to satisfy the apostolic form, is safer (they think) as regards the spiritual life of the Church. And we must remember that it is not sufficient to reply to this objection, that Episcopacy is the ordinance of Christ and therefore we ought to content ourselves with the belief that what He instituted is the safest for the life of the Church. For, as we have seen throughout our argument, Christ's ordinances in His Church are not law in the strict sense of the word, but νόμος λογικός, an order resting not on bare authority but on reasonable and spiritual principles. However, to one who has real faith in Christ and in His kingdom, the objection answers itself. For if there is an office which has great power in stimulating the spiritual life of the Church when exercised by one who is himself spiritual, and the sphere of which is not too large for the ordinary powers of man, then we might conclude at once that this would be an office in the kingdom of heaven;

otherwise all the agencies would not be employed in that kingdom, which are naturally most adapted to promote its highest interests. If there were anything in the office itself which tended to make a man unspiritual, this indeed would be an objection against its being an institution of Christ; but this will hardly be asserted of the apostolic office, and is not the objection raised. The possibility of its being abused by unspiritual and unfaithful men is no argument whatever against its existence. The Gospel is the dispensation of the Spirit, and its economy proceeds on the assumption, not indeed that men will be free from imperfections, infirmities, and sins, but that the Spirit is given, and will abide with the Church for ever, to enable it through all its offices to fulfil the purposes of the kingdom. An apostle betrayed Christ as none but an apostle could have done; but that was no argument against the office of an apostle.

But whilst Church life is, by the very constitution of the Church, in near relation with the personal spiritual life, there are also, on the other hand, indications in the epistles of the necessity of the latter, as distinct from the Church life and not to be confounded with it. At the close of each epistle a special promise is given by the Son of Man to "him that overcometh;" and that we may not dream that such promises, or even the warnings and exhortations to the angel, concern only official duties and responsibilities, the solemn summons rings out each time as with the sound of a trumpet, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit "saith unto the churches."

Indeed the promise, when compared with the address to the Church through its angel, is singularly instructive as to the distinctness of the personal life. It

teaches us that all real victory for the Christian must be personal. Profoundly as his own spiritual life must be affected by the corporate life of the body, yet he can neither gain the victory for himself by the victory of the Church, nor need he participate in the defeats of the Church. Every man must bear his own burden and fight his own battle. It is fatal to isolate himself from the body, but it is equally fatal to confound himself with the body. And, although the first purpose of Church life, next to glorifying Christ before men, is to cherish and aid the spiritual life in the soul and conscience of every man, yet at times it may act in a totally different manner, and supply the very trials and temptations which the individual Christian has to overcome in order to gain his own reward. This is remarkably illustrated in the epistle to Thyatira. The corporate Church life, though vigorous and fervent, was in alliance with anti-Christian principles, acts, and power. The complete victory could only be gained by resisting these evil tendencies of the Church life, by men becoming exceptions to it in this respect. And this is very clearly marked in the epistle. After the address to the angel the divine voice continues, "But to you I say,* "the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not "this doctrine, such as have not known the depths of "Satan (as they say), I will not lay on you any other "burden; only what ye have, hold until I shall come." That is, although the Church was really a Church, and its angel really a star in Christ's right hand, nevertheless it was by their being exceptions, by being a remnant

* The καὶ of the received version is not found in any of the most ancient MSS. or versions, except in the Vulgate. It has been observed that the absence of the καὶ is fatal to some Presbyterian speculations; it is equally fatal to those Church theories which substitute Church life for the personal life.

who had resisted the Church tendencies around them, that the victory was gained. This truth is yet more conspicuous in the epistle to Sardis. The general Church life only deserved the name of death; "But," the Lord says to the angel of the Church, "thou hast a "few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their "garments; and they shall walk with me in white for "they are worthy. He that overcometh, he shall be "clothed in white garments." The exceptions here are individualised by the expression "a few names." They are in the communion of the Church, but they have gained the victory, not with the Church, but in spite of the pollutions, whatever these were, with which it was filled and which destroyed the value of all its works.

Without pursuing these considerations further, it is sufficient for our argument to observe, that neither must the profound conviction of the necessity to every soul of man of personal life in Christ weaken our sense of the value of the organic life of the Church, nor must our firm belief in the reality of that organic life be allowed to obscure the truth that our spiritual life is only through personal faith and communion with Him. The Church life is not merely for the advantage of the personal life; nor the personal life merely for the sustenance of Church life; but they react mutually one on the other; and that which God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

CONCLUSION.

THE argument, which it was proposed to investigate out of those sacred records from which the Christian faith is derived, is now completed. The question was, whether these records would enable us to ascertain the laws which must govern the formation of Christian society, and whether we could trace in them the action of these laws until those types of Christian social life, which are their legitimate and true development, should be determined. We had also to inquire whether this Genesis of the Christian society was simply the result of the operation of the laws; or whether Jesus Christ Himself, as the Creator of this new world, interposed His own acts of authority in order to determine more definitely its form and constitution. The conclusions, to which our investigations have led us, are far too numerous to be here recapitulated. But, numerous as they are, they are connected by great general laws, and are therefore both complete and intelligible. We have found, that whilst law,—in its original sense of a command fenced in by prohibitions and penalties,—has no place in the kingdom of Christ, being unsuitable for the spiritual or religious life of man, a divine order has developed itself out of the fundamental principles of love to God and man and of the supremacy of conscience, which are law in a higher sense, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. But we also found that

the divine Teacher of men did not leave this order to evolve itself indefinitely and uncertainly, but in His teaching expressly indicated what would be the laws of Christian fellowship; whilst by His acts,—especially by the appointment and mission of the Twelve, and by the institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper,—He created the elementary forms out of which, through the action of these laws, His Church should be completely developed. And for this purpose, He gave after His ascension the Holy Spirit, not only by a moral and spiritual influence to direct His disciples and guide them into all the truth, but also by an external testimony to establish and aid them, fixing here and there certain landmarks of the truth, and stimulating the spiritual principles by authoritative confirmations. But this external testimony was only for a time, until the whole truth necessary should be revealed, and until the form of the kingdom of Christ on earth should have attained its maturity. We have also traced, in the history and the writings of the apostles of Jesus Christ, the gradual operation of the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and their results becoming more and more definite, so that before the death of the apostles Peter and Paul the structure of the Church was complete in all its main portions, and nothing was needed except that final development of its permanent form which could not take place until two events should have occurred. The first of these was the overthrow of the Old Testament polity by the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. The second was the cessation of the extraordinary powers and peculiar prerogatives of the original apostolic body, which were to pass into the ordinary gifts and authority belonging to the permanent order of the Church.

What that ultimate development would be we are not left merely to infer from the principles previously established. A final Revelation from Jesus Christ is given through the last of the apostles, who forms a link between the transitional and the permanent state of the kingdom; and in this Revelation the order of the Church is represented in its matured and developed form, independent of the original apostles, except as those from whom it sprang, and through whom the truth was revealed. And in this Revelation, although it addresses us in ideal and symbolical language, we trace without difficulty, with the aid of the apostolical teaching which has preceded, a constitution of Christ's Holy Catholic Church suited for all ages and for all the varying conditions of human life and society.

It would of course supply an important confirmation to these conclusions, if we should discover from post-apostolic records that the organic forms, the growth of which we have traced in the New Testament, were actually in existence in the age immediately following that of the apostles, if not universally, at all events generally, and especially in that part of the Christian Church which is selected in the final Revelation as a representation of the universal Church. Any inquiry, however, which should extend beyond the limits of the Holy Scriptures themselves, would require a different process of investigation from that which is adopted in this argument. For in this we have assumed not only the authenticity and genuineness of the several books of the New Testament, but also their authority; that is, not only that their testimony to historical facts is to be trusted, but also that the principles, by which Christians ought to be guided, are there authoritatively revealed. No Christian supposes this of the writings

of Polycarp and Ignatius, however valuable he may consider them as a witness to the faith and discipline of the primitive Church. Our argument therefore rests entirely on the records of the New Testament, and its purpose is to prove that Christians, who receive these as the source and standard of their religion, differ as to the true external form of Christianity not because it may not be ascertained from these records, but because they do not recognise or investigate the evidence which the sacred Scripture supplies.

That this argument will satisfy all who accept the authority of the New Testament, is not of course supposed; it is more probable, that many of the conclusions would be challenged not only by one school of religious opinion, but in turn by all. But this at least may be claimed for the argument, that it is complete and consistent with itself; and that, not by any theory being propounded to which the evidence is bound to agree, but simply by carrying forward the several laws of Christian society, as they are established, to aid us in understanding the fresh evidence afforded in the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles; such evidence however being allowed to speak for itself, and not constrained by some forced interpretation to conform to the principles. One who is investigating the laws of the natural world must proceed by such a method; and his success will depend on the fearlessness and the skill with which he discusses the evidence, and on his ability to discern the general laws by which the several facts are connected. If the argument, in some part of this work, fails from the want of these qualities, let such errors be corrected. But the main conclusions to which it points will not be affected by many such errors or omissions. These

conclusions are determined from Holy Scripture by evidence and reasonings as complete, in their own sphere, as those by which, for instance, the main principles of the science of political economy are established. And we do not admit that the proofs of scientific laws are insufficient, merely because many persons are found who will not be convinced of the truth of these laws. But there are other obstacles besides those of an uninformed judgment, or an unscientific habit of mind, which will always interfere with conclusions as to the religious life of man; we must expect that, so long as the world lasts in its present state, there will be those who will substitute some theory of their own, or some traditional system inherited from their forefathers, or some monstrous growth of the ages, for the divine constitution of the Church as it is revealed in the New Testament. Truth, powerful as it is, rarely wins its victories in those minds in which the feelings are preoccupied. But, if any one is dissatisfied with the conclusions to which this argument has led us, let me pray him, in the name of our common Lord and Master, and for the sake of that Church which He purchased with His blood, not to content himself with objecting to certain parts of the argument, or to some of the expositions of Scripture; but let him patiently and honestly grapple with the whole question, and endeavour to construct for himself an argument of the same kind as is here presented. Only let him not begin by assuming that which has to be proved. When we proceed by assuming, for example, that because St Peter held a primacy among the Twelve, therefore this must be part of the permanent order of the Church; or that the office of apostles cannot be permanent, because the Twelve and St Paul had special functions; or that

because apostles and presbyters had many functions in common, therefore there is but one degree in the pastoral office; or that because presbyters were called bishops, therefore they were bishops in the ecclesiastical sense of the word; or that the body of Christ must be "the invisible Church;" or that the order of the Church cannot be of much consequence to the interests of Christianity, if only we follow our own conscientious convictions;—we must not be surprised if we fail in either convincing others, or attaining any certainty in our conclusions. It is as if we should commence the study of astronomy by assuming that the earth must be stationary, or that the moon must be larger than the planets, or anything else that may at first sight seem obviously true.

Nor will it be a less fatal obstacle to the discovery of truth, if we assume, as many do, that nothing can be of great importance in religion, which is not plainly and expressly set down in Holy Scripture; in other words, which requires continued thought and patient investigation for its complete determination. Such persons forget that that which has rendered Holy Scripture intelligible to ordinary Christians is the thought and the investigations of its translators. Indeed, although Revelation as a whole appeals directly to the conscience even of the most illiterate, yet much of the New Testament,—notably much of the argumentative writings of St Paul,—presumes in its readers an amount of intellectual training which probably not one in a hundred, at least in England, has received, whatever may have been the case in Corinth and Rome. The question of plainness or obscurity is one of degree, respecting which different minds will judge very differently, and which therefore cannot be taken as a stan-

dard of the relative importance of truths. Some persons will deny that the divinity of Jesus Christ is expressly set down in Holy Scripture; others, that the constitution of the Church is clearly revealed. In fact the objection against conclusions from Revelation, because they are not plainly taught, is in spirit the objection urged by the Jews against Jesus Himself; "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou "be the Christ, tell us plainly."

There is one caution however as to the conclusions to which this argument has led us, which it may be expedient to repeat here, although it has been already more than once suggested. Our argument is, that the true form and constitution of the Church of Christ may be ascertained from the New Testament, with as much certainty as the laws of the physical world from nature, or those of the social and economical life of man from experience and observation. But it must be noticed that in those subordinate branches of human knowledge, although conclusions may be certainly true in themselves, yet they are often complicated by others in some wider sphere, which affect very materially the general and complete result. For example, the conclusions which are determined by the science of chemistry as to food, may be practically modified or completely altered by discoveries in physiology; results, which may be established with the utmost certainty by the science of political economy, may be so affected by other causes, such as the moral influences indirectly resulting from some measure, as to make any given problem indeterminate. But the higher we advance in the scale of knowledge, the more general do the laws become, and the greater is our certainty as to the ultimate results. Now if we believe Holy Scripture to be the revelation of

the mind of God to man, we must be assured that the conclusions thence drawn as to human life are not some inferior and limited laws, but truths of the highest order, to which all other truths must be subordinate, universal laws for man. But we must observe, also, that among the conclusions drawn from Scripture itself there are both primary and secondary laws. Those as to the constitution of the Christian Church result, we have found, from yet more profound and universal principles; from the love of Christ to man, and from the constitution of human nature itself. Whilst, therefore, we maintain our conclusions to be as certain as those which can be attained in any science, we must not forget, on the other hand, that the laws established are secondary, not primary laws. If from them we should draw any practical inferences, or if we should impose on them any interpretation, at variance with the higher laws of the Christian life, with the first principles of the law of love, or again with those of the true constitution of man; we may be persuaded that our inferences and interpretations are not to be trusted. We should need then to be reminded of the comparative value of knowledge and of charity; and further, that all ordinances of God are made for man, not man for the ordinances.

THE END.

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